

Turner's 12. 1830

S H O R T
M E D I T A T I O N S
O N
Select Portions of Scripture;
D E S I G N E D
To assist the Serious CHRISTIAN in the
Improvement of the
L O R D ' S D A Y,
And other SEASONS of DEVOTION and LEISURE.

By DANIEL TURNER, M.A.

THE THIRD EDITION.

My GOD, permit me not to be
A Stranger to myself and Thee.

WATTS.

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M D C C X C V I I I .

MEMORIALS

OF THE



BY DANIEL TURNER, M.A.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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MDCCLXXXIII.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

DEVOUT exercises of the mind on the perfections, providence, and grace of God, and the obligations we are under to piety and virtue, have been the business and pleasure of good men in all ages of the world. And our own hearts will tell us, that nothing can be more becoming our rational nature, than a reverent attention to subjects of such infinite excellence in themselves and importance to us. GOD is the Father of our Spirits, the BEING in whom we live and move. His providence extends its influence from the highest angel to the lowest worm. The dispensations of his grace are as interesting as they are stupendous; his favour constitutes our highest bliss, his displeasure our greatest misery. And all the discoveries he makes of himself to us are designed, not only to engage our attention, but to warm our hearts

with supreme love to him, and engage us in a steady course of obedience to his will.

Bad as the world is, there are doubtless many, who are sincere lovers of GOD, and keep up a daily correspondence with him in the duties of piety, to whom the following Meditations may be not only acceptable, but, perhaps, particularly serviceable towards assisting them in a due improvement of the LORD'S DAY, upon which the preservation of religion, in its vital power in the heart, and its influence upon the life, very much depend.

Suppose, therefore, in the morning of that day, at some convenient time before the public service, the serious Christian were to read and think over one of these Meditations; and, after having enlarged in his own thoughts upon the subject, turn the substance of it into a prayer;—would it not be a likely means of assisting him in disengaging his heart from the world, and of disposing him to approach the Divine Majesty, in the public institutions of religion, with more real devotion?

tion?—Might it not help to raise his affections to spiritual things, and fix them there with more ease; to draw out his soul with more vigour in public prayer and thanksgiving; and enable him to receive the word of life with more relish and satisfaction?—And if, in the evening of that day, he should endeavour to recollect the substance of the discourses he has heard, somewhat in the manner here specified, might it not be a still further improvement of the sacred time, and answer some valuable purposes in the Christian life, the support of which ought to be our most serious concern, and to which all the duties of devotion should be directed?

But though these Meditations are thus particularly designed to lead to the improvement of the LORD'S DAY, they may, through the divine assistance, be useful at other times; especially in those seasons of devout retirement, when the mind is in a more dull and languid frame, and wants something to stir up its sluggish powers, and set the thoughts a going. Nor, as

they are so short, may they be without their use in the shop, or in the field, for the more profitable improvement of the minutes of leisure, which so often occur there.

Most of these Meditations are the substance of the sermons preached from the several respective texts at the head of them; and are indeed the chief branches of each discourse thrown together from the memory, with such additions, as were necessary to reduce them into their present form, in which they may be patterns for others on the like occasions.

The considerate will not expect laboured thoughts and studied argument in so short a compass as the longest of these pieces; nor, when the occasion and design are attended to, any curious cultivation of style: and yet, I hope, the truly pious reader will not find them the less useful on that account, if he finds a propriety becoming the dignity of religion tolerably preserved, and the warmth of expression, designed to animate his devotion, no further indulged than the nature of the subject admits.

The

The brevity of these exercises will, it is hoped, obviate every objection arising from the want of time, inclination, or capacity for the perusal of discourses that require long and close attention; and at the same time leave those who have a relish for retired devotion, the more room for their own reflections upon the subject before them.

The design of this publication is not to promote any party interest, but to awaken and cherish the spirit of true devotion and practical religion amongst all. I have, indeed, expressed myself very strongly and frequently in favour of the doctrines of the NECESSITY OF DIVINE INFLUENCES, in order to our restoration to the love and practice of true holiness; and of the atoning EFFICACY OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, or his OBEDIENCE to the death of the cross, in order to our pardon and acceptance with God, consistently with the honour of his government. The reason is, I cannot help considering these doctrines, as not only
CLEARLY

CLEARLY and REPEATEDLY inculcated in the scriptures, and capable of the most rational defence, but also as the very life and soul of all evangelical piety and virtue, and consequently of the highest importance to the interest of religion. Without the belief of the doctrine of Divine Influences, the great duty of Prayer appears to me but a solemn mockery of GOD, and our own souls; and without the belief of an ATONING MEDIATOR, and an humble penitential trust in the virtue of his blood and righteousness, as the corner stone of our Hope of eternal life, that Hope, I fear, will prove no better than a most dangerous presumption.

How far I have done right, in venturing these compositions to appear before the eye of the public, and what reception they will meet with, time must discover. But as the design is undeniably good, it is hoped the veil of candour will be so far drawn over their many imperfections, as not to obstruct their usefulness.

ABINGDON,
September 22, 1785.

D. T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE few Verses added here and there, chiefly at the end of the Meditations, are designed not only to fill up the Page, but also to gratify the taste of some of my friends, and help to fix the leading ideas of the subject they refer to, the more easily in the memory. Those which I have borrowed, I have taken care to acknowledge, by adding the name of the author.

The Considerations on the Custom of Visiting on Sundays, were communicated to me, by a particular Friend, from a very pious and worthy Clergyman of the Established Church, with a desire of their being published with these Meditations, as particularly agreeable to the design of them: accordingly I have given them a place by way of APPENDIX; and earnestly wish they may answer the valuable purposes the pious author had in view.

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MEDITATIONS,

MEDITATIONS, &c.

MEDITATION I.

—*It behoved Christ to suffer.* Luke xxiv. 46.

GREAT mistake of the disciples, to think that their Messiah and deliverer should be a temporal prince, and appear in the world merely to raise them to temporal honour and felicity; when the whole tenor of the prophecies, promises, and sacrifices, so well known to them, inculcated the contrary notion, and led them to expect a *Saviour* MIGHTY IN SUFFERINGS, and effecting redemption from their moral pollutions and guilt, by the exercise of a spiritual power founded in the acceptableness of that sacrifice he should offer unto God! Yet so it was. However, after the resurrection of Jesus, especially after the pouring out of his holy spirit, the matter was cleared up to their en-

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tire satisfaction; and they saw, indeed, in the clearest light, that *it behoved Christ to suffer*, viz. That it was necessary for completely answering to the gracious declarations and types of the Old Testament œconomy, and the faith and hope of the true believers, before his coming in the flesh, which they had built upon this foundation.—It was also necessary Christ should suffer, in order to preserve, in the eyes of all intelligent beings, the honour and dignity of the divine government, or a due sense of the majesty of God, his perfections and laws, while he shewed mercy to guilty creatures, in such a rich and glorious abundance as he now does.—It was necessary, in order to give such views of God, as might encourage our repentance, and return to our duty; inspire us with a humble confidence in him; assure us of his gracious acceptance; and answer the doubts and fears of our consciences—necessary, as a means of kindling in our hearts the true love of God and holiness, and of making way for the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to free us from the law of sin and death, of uniting us to God, and of leading us into the divine pleasures of communion with him—necessary, for the having
always

always before our eyes, a most perfect striking example of patience and self-denial, contempt of the glory of this world, and the most steady and ardent pursuit of a better—and, in a word, necessary to complete his mediatorial character, and make way for that glory and felicity with which he is rewarded in the heavenly world.

Here pause then, my soul, and consider the wisdom, the justice, the benevolence of the DEITY, as they stand displayed in this scheme of redemption! — Let all thy attention be employed in beholding what manner of love this is! — Look upon him whom thy sins have pierced! — See him expiring in inconceivable distress and agony of body and mind, because bearing thy sins (with those of others) upon the cross! Consider, how awful that justice is, that must be this way atoned! — How great that mercy that must be this way shewn to guilty creatures! — Think how worthy this benevolence is, of all thy most grateful acceptance, thy everlasting admiration and praise? Think too, whence it can be, that this love of God and his Christ makes no deeper impressions on thy affections, begets no deeper sense of obligation? — Surely,

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in this view there is every motive that can be conceived, for the profoundest reverence and fear; for the most ardent love, and animated obedience!—If this grace of God, appearing in the sufferings of Christ, with such a salutary and beneficial design in respect of thy everlasting happiness, does not prevail upon thee to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world*, there is nothing in nature, no nor in grace that can. If this unparalleled love does not soften and melt thy whole heart into a cordial submission to the divine authority, thy hardness is utterly incurable; for this, and this only, is the power of God to salvation.

Let it be then thy daily care and prayer to the Almighty, to shed abroad *this love* upon thee; to implant it as a vital principle in thy conscience and affections; — Thus wilt thou indeed live to God here, in the practice of universal holiness, and be prepared for the enjoyment of his most blissful presence in the world to come, where the once *crucified Jesus* now lives and reigns, having all the *fulness of the Godhead in him*—and where thou wilt see him in all *his glory*, as one that has *loved thee, and washed thee from thy sins in his own blood!*

MEDITATION II.

—Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises— 2 Pet. i. 4.

WHETHER the apostle here means, by which power and virtue, or by which God and Christ, are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, it is much the same as to the import and comfort of the words to us; for still God, through Christ, is the author of these promises, his pure benevolence the fountain from whence they flow—promises not of an earthly, but an heavenly Canaan—not of temporal riches and grandeur, but of pardon, holiness, adoption, peace with God, a safe conduct through this world, and the valley of death, the resurrection of the body, and the enjoyment of eternal life and glory. Promises adapted, not to the cravings of the men of this world, who have their portion in this life, and who therefore over-

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look and despise them ; but to the necessities and taste of the truly enlightened and awakened mind——

—— Promises therefore justly styled *exceeding great and precious*. Worthy indeed of all acceptation, of our warmest and most affectionate embraces, of our highest confidence and joy ;—for they are the words of God, the greatest and best of beings ; his *gracious* words, the dictates of his infinite and undeserved goodness and love ; words that speak the greatness of his mercy, and display all the perfections of his nature in the most amiable light.—Their truth and importance is ratified by the precious blood of Christ, shed as a sacrifice for sin, and offered to God ; and therefore styled *the blood of the everlasting covenant*, rendering all his promises to us *yea and Amen*. Their publication from time to time, was accompanied with eminent demonstrations of the divine power ; and particularly in the days of Christ and his apostles, to whose declarations and assurances of divine mercy to sinners, God himself is said to *bear witness by signs and wonders*.—They are tendered to us also with the most gracious freedom ; so that *whosoever will may come* and partake of the important

important blessings contained in them, notwithstanding any unworthiness in himself, if he does indeed penitently and sincerely desire it.—The good things contained in them are absolutely necessary to our well-being in time and eternity;—are capable of producing the most salutary, and every way happy and glorious effects;—to make us truly wise, holy, spiritually minded;—to support us under the severest trials, and inspire us with the noblest magnanimity and elevation of soul;—and, in a word, unite us to God, and make us partakers of his likeness and glory!

Mayest thou, my soul, see the promises of the gospel in this divine light, and feel these happy effects from them! Mayest thou always remember, that it is not enough to receive comfort from them, unless that comfort be attended with real holiness of heart and life! But,

If the promises of the gospel are thus great and precious, the sin of neglecting them, (however common) must be proportionably great and dangerous. Do thou therefore, O Lord, keep back thy servant from this presumptuous sin!

The

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The riches of the grace these promises contain, and the freedom with which they are offered, forbid also my despair.—However wretched my condition, if I really see and feel it, and seek my comfort here, I have blessed encouragement to hope. How thankful should I be for this! Let me never, never more despond in any of my trials and afflictions! Never doubt the power, the love, the faithfulness of that GOD, who has given such words for my consolation! Here, O my soul, leave all thy burdens and cares! When discouraged and fainting, here be thy rest! These are the everlasting arms, that strengthen and uphold all that fear God, that conduct them through life, deliver them in death, and ensure their complete and eternal salvation!

Lord, to thy gracious word I fly,

And there I put my trust;

Or if thy hand exalts me high,

Or lays me in the dust.

While there I fix my longing eyes,

And drink the blessing in,

I taste far more than mortal joys,

And feel my heav'n begin.

MEDITA

MEDITATION III.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. James i. 22.

WAS it indeed necessary for the apostle, in those early and happier days of Christianity, to give such an exhortation to the professors of that blessed and most animating religion? How much more necessary then for the ministers of the present day, to urge the like upon the attention of their hearers? Surely now, when the divine spirit has so justly withdrawn his gracious influences, and left so many, bearing the Christian name, to sink into formality and coldness, the dispensers of the divine word have need to use the most pleasing and alarming methods of rousing the attention of their hearers; and to warn and rebuke, as well as exhort, with all long suffering.

It is even afflicting to see the air of indolence and inattention that reigns in many of our

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our worshipping assemblies; and the trifling, if not really loose and immoral practices of some who are pretty constant there! They hear indeed, but, if with any degree of attention, yet with very little concern and self-application.—They hear to pass away the time—to keep up the appearances of religion—to pacify their consciences, ready to reproach them with profaneness if they should do otherwise—or, perhaps, merely to furnish themselves with fresh materials for dispute and wrangling.—Thus their religion terminates with the hour of public worship, or appears only in notional speculations, empty applauses, or unjust censures, of what they have heard.

Against this evil conduct the apostle sets his face with great seriousness, and points out the opposite duty, that of a *practical improvement of what we hear*.—This is the end indeed of all divine ordinances, particularly of the preaching of the sacred word; and this is the great end we should always have in view in our attendance upon it.—Now, this *doing* of the word seems particularly to imply—that we heartily credit what that word declares, or receive it as a message from God—that we believe

lieve or confide in what it promises—that we make conscience of conforming our temper and conduct to its precepts—and, that we rejoice in the pleasures it ensures to us as our best portion—even the pleasures of pardon, holiness, communion with GOD, in his ordinances here, and the visions of his glory hereafter, taking them as our heritage for ever.

My soul ! hast thou thus regarded the word of GOD ? Hast thou not only believed it true, but felt and rejoiced in its power, as giving thee divine life ; leading thee out of all vain and delusive confidence and hope, to the genuine fountain of blifs ! Hast thou indeed chosen the divine precept for the rule of thy temper, thy thoughts, thy life ? Hast thou chosen the divine promises, as thy best comforters in distress in time, and thy surest portion, and highest joy, for eternity ? This is what thou oughtest to have done ; this should be at least thy aim and desire, thy *servent desire*, in every sermon.—Never satisfy thyself, therefore, without attaining this end, in some degree, by every one of them.—To fall short here, is the most dangerous and deplorable delusion. It is cheating thyself of heaven, and plunging into endless ruin, under the notion

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tion and persuasion of happiness!—A delusion indeed too common, and very pleasing to the deluded, while it lasts; but so much the more alarming and terrible when discovered, as it must be in another world.—Awake then to righteousness—make conscience of putting in practice what thou hearest—and remember it as seriously as it deserves, that according to thy practical regards to this word, or the want of them, will thy portion be in that ETERNITY which cannot be afar off.

Deceive myself?—Oh! how unwise?

How can I bear the thought of this!

To heaven in pleasing hope to rise.

Then sink at once to hell's abyss!

Forbid the dread delusion, Lord!

And by thy grace my heart renew,

That I may hear thy holy word,

So as to love and keep it too!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION IV.

*But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou
mayest be feared.*

Psal. cxxx. 4.

WHAT delightful words do I hear! Forgiveness with an offended God, who could as easily punish as forgive! Forgiveness too for *me*, if I am willing to accept it in his way, for *me* a great, and therefore a miserable sinner; even to *me* are the words of his salvation sent!

It is very evident from the context, that the person who makes this truly evangelical remark, was in some deep distress; and that this distress (in part at least) arose from the sight and feeling of his sins, and their dreadful desert (a point too little attended to by the bulk of mankind, though equally concerned in it); *for*, says he, *if thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?* “Not
“ I most certainly—for I see and feel the
“ contrary in my own conscience; I fly,
C “ therefore,

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“ therefore, to thy pardoning mercy ; I draw
 “ my consolation and hope from that foun-
 “ tain—*for there is forgiveness with thee, that*
 “ *thou mayest be feared.*” This is a doctrine as
 important as necessary, and should be there-
 fore as welcome to us, as it was to the Psalmist.
 But is it true ? May it be absolutely depended
 on ? What evidence have we of it ? Or upon
 what ground may we venture to rest this great
 conclusion ?

I answer,

Upon the general discoveries of that mercy
 which the great God has been pleased to
 make to mankind in all ages of the world—
 particularly to our first parents themselves—
 to *Abel, Enoch, Abraham, &c.* and upon the
 nature and design of the Mosaic constitution
 and sacrifices, and the whole tenor of the
 spirit of prophecy. We have also a further
 ground for this conclusion in the gracious ap-
 pointment of a mediator, of the mere good
 pleasure of God. For we may be sure he
 would not have appointed any mediator for
 us, much less *such* a one as his glorious son
 CHRIST JESUS, had he not been graciously
 disposed to *forgiveness* in favour of sinful
 man ; nor would he have taken such care to
 evidence

evidence that appointment, and draw our attention to it, by so many extraordinary and even miraculous interpositions of his providence, had he not intended such mercy. All this is still more abundantly confirmed by what Jesus had done and suffered in the execution of this office; particularly, by the absolute perfection of his obedience, and the full atonement he made to the divine justice by the blood of the cross—by the many clear and express promises of the forgiveness of sin through the virtue of this blood—by the free and gracious manner in which these promises set forth this mercy to all penitent believers without exception. In a word, the whole gospel, from beginning to end, is a glorious display of the divine benevolence to sinful men, and holds forth this great and interesting truth as a capital and leading article in their hope towards God, and desire of his salvation; all which our Lord himself has comprised and confirmed in those glorious words—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!* John iii. 16. I may, therefore, with the utmost safety conclude, that if, struck with this

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view of things, I feel myself awakened to a sense of my miserable condition as a sinner, and do, indeed, forsake my evil ways and thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, believing and trusting in the blood and righteousness of this great mediator, I shall also find, by happy experience, that there is *forgiveness* with my offended God for me; and may depend upon the truth declared in the text, and rejoice in it, as the consolation and life of my soul!

And this believing regard to the divine forgiveness, or at least some hope of it, is absolutely necessary to the true *fear of God*; to *that fear*, which includes in it the willing and steady observance of his righteous laws. For, without some belief and hope of such mercy, and even some feeling of it in the heart, we shall either cast off all thoughts of God, and true religion, or serve him (if it may be called serving him) with a constrained reluctance, and not with that cheerfulness and love he requires, and which the shedding abroad of his forgiving love in our hearts tends to dispose us to. We read therefore of having *the conscience purged from dead works, to serve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14.

But

But hast thou, O my soul, indeed felt the influence of this grace? Hast thou been drawn to God, by the experience of his forgiveness? And doest thou live habitually in his *fear*, because thou hast tasted of his *love*? Has the SAVIOUR won upon thy affections, and engaged thee to his service by his goodness? It is to be hoped this is in some measure thy case, or it is bad indeed; but oh that it were more abundantly so! — Thou hast some hope in the divine forgiveness, and findest this hope in some measure influence thy conduct, and lead thee to press after that holiness, in which consisteth thy nearest and most important resemblance to God. Sin is bitter to thee, not only because it brings the wrath of God upon thee, but because it insults that blessed and most amiable goodness, which thy Saviour has manifested in dying for thee, and affronts thy heavenly Father, who, through the blood of that Saviour, has manifested his forgiveness to thee. This is so far well. But contemplate daily this divine and most important mercy, as a means of exciting thy greater care to avoid all sin, and improve in that genuine fear of God, which flows from a sense of his gracious pardon!

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MEDITATION V.

*For it pleased the Father that in him should all
fulness dwell.* Col. i. 19.

THE excellencies of Christ were the delight of the great apostle who wrote this epistle to the Colossians.—He himself had a very deep insight into them, and took peculiar pleasure in declaring to others what he so well knew.

This chapter abounds with the noblest and most sublime sentiments concerning the Blessed Redeemer; this text gives the reason of the whole—for it hath pleased the Father that in him should ALL fulness dwell.—The words so emphatically expressed naturally imply, that all the perfections of the DEITY dwell in the Son of God; and accordingly we read that *he was in the beginning with God, and was God; IMMANUEL, God with us.*—[John i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Mat. i. 23. Col. ii. 9.]—God
manifest

manifest in the flesh,—and that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him.—All the excellencies of the human nature are also to be found in him, and these carried to the greatest height of improvement, by its intimate union with the DEITY, and peculiar communications from it. *So it pleased the Father* that his Son might appear worthy of his high relation, *full of grace and truth*, and the power and wisdom necessary to the character of the creator, preserver, and governor of all things; the head of all things to the church, the mediator between God and man, the redeemer of an, otherwise, lost world—or, as the apostle expresses it in the context, that he might *reconcile all things unto God*, as well as make and govern all things for him.

This fulness also appears in the nature and importance of his office of mediator;—the great things he has done in creation, providence, and grace, particularly in his *redeeming us to God, by his blood*. In these things, and the like, in which a great deal of his fulness consisteth, we have the most awful and delightful displays of the divine perfections; such as have a peculiar fitness in them to strike the human mind, and fill it with the profoundest
awe,

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awe, and the most sublime and delightful hopes.

What a surprising and afflicting thing is it then that such a divine and glorious personage, invested with such high and glorious characters, and replenished with *the fulness of GOD*, in the highest sense of the word, should stand forth in the view of mankind, as he does in the blessed gospel, and be no more regarded!—Amongst the thousands that hear and read of his excellencies, how few love and admire him indeed, or feel any sense of those excellencies!—How many even *despise him*, as having no *form or comeliness* in him!

How then, my soul, dost thou stand affected towards this Saviour? What hast thou seen of his excellencies, and how far have they, indeed, impressed and moved thy affectionate powers? Thou owest all to him, that thou canst call *enjoyment*, either in possession or in hope! Let the glories of thy Redeemer be more attentively considered—Let his love constrain thee to the supreme love of GOD, and just love to man.—To this fulness go, in all thy necessities; here look for light, and life, and joy eternal.—To his service and pleasure devote all thy powers; live to
him

him in improving holiness—Let the liberty he has given thee of applying to him as the fountain of happiness, encourage thee to diligence and constancy in that application.—Let thy thirst be always for these *living waters*, which alone are capable of satisfying thee.—As he is all *fulness* to thee, be thou all *gratitude*, and *love*, and *praise* to him; rejoice in him as thy light, thy strength, thy righteousness, and thy salvation! Amen!

Hail, thou eternal fulness, hail!

Great source of bliss divine!

In whom adoring angels see,

All thy great Father shine.

JESUS!—Oh may that best of names

Dwell ever on my tongue!

On earth, my solace, hope, and love,

In heaven my rapturous song!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION VI.

→ *The power of his resurrection.* Phil. iii. 10.

IT is one of the many excellencies of our Bible, that points of the greatest importance are there revealed to us with the greatest clearness, and supported with most invincible evidence.—Such is the resurrection of Christ. On this fact, therefore, the apostle insisted in almost every sermon. On this depends the faith, and hope, and eternal salvation, of the whole church.—Here the power of God, his truth and faithfulness, love and mercy, are particularly and eminently displayed.—Here the power of Christ himself, or his ability to save, even unto the uttermost, is wonderfully exemplified; for here we see him triumphing over all his enemies, and treading down their power in the dust.—Here his character and pretensions, as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, is abundantly illustrated; for we may be sure that the power of
God

GOD would never have been exerted in so signal a manner in a bad cause, or have raised an impostor from the dead.—And yet that Christ was raised from the dead, is greatly evident from various considerations, relative to the history itself, and its design and consequences: particularly the constant united testimony of the disciples, convinced themselves by the force of truth against their own strong prejudices—the testimony of the enemies of Christ—the miraculous powers bestowed upon the apostles in consequence of it, and the moral good promoted by the belief of it in the world.

We may now, therefore, be confident, that if we commit our souls to this Redeemer in well-doing, he will effectually secure their immortal interest; for, by his resurrection, he gives divine worth and vital efficacy to his sacrifice, on which our pardon and acceptance with God depend, presenting it a *living sacrifice* to the Father—while the Father himself, by employing his power, in this resurrection, actually declares his acceptance of it in our behalf, and shews himself a God reconciled to us. This doctrine also, or the record of this truth cordially believed, has proved

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proved of efficacy sufficient to quicken myriads of creatures dead in sin, and raise them to a life of solid holiness—to lead them into the true knowledge, worship, and love of God, and the enjoyment of his favour—to encourage and support their faith and hope of present comfort and future glory, and so engage them in a course of true evangelical obedience.

And thus we see the Christian religion is a matter not of mere speculation, but of powerful experience; a system of truth intended to impress the heart, and fill it with divine consolation, hope, and joy, the love of holiness and of God.—It becomes thee therefore, O my soul, seriously to consider with thyself, whether this effect has been produced in thee? Whether the record of a once crucified, but now risen Saviour, has reached thy conscience, and diffused divine life through all thy powers—What hope, what trust, what humility, what love, what zeal for God dost thou discover in consequence of thy hearing that Christ is risen?—This is the point, and of infinite importance it is. For unless the grace of God thus manifested has power upon thee to transform thee into the same image, it

is

is to no purpose that thou hearest, or even believest it true. The day is coming, when this almighty Saviour shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, and destroy all that know not God, nor obey his gospel, by the greatness of that power by which he arose from the dead! O fly then to the throne of grace, and plead there, that the love of God may be shed abroad in thee, and become a vital principle of divine holiness and hope. This is to *know*, indeed, *the power of his resurrection!*

While I believe the glorious things

That love divine has done,

How HE who dy'd upon a cross

Now fills th' eternal throne;

I long to feel the heav'nly truth

In all its vital pow'r;

That I may leave my flesh in hope,

To live, to die no more!

MEDITATION VII.

— *Compel them to come in.* Luke xiv. 23.

IS it not surprising that sinful men, in danger of eternal perdition, should require any kind of compulsion to embrace deliverance from that danger, and be eternally happy? Yet so it is, as we see in fact in innumerable instances; and so our text intimates it would be, even under all the advantages of a gospel revelation. Such is the depravity which sin brings upon the human nature!

By compulsion here, however, we are certainly not to understand any external violence, or even any internal force upon the *mind* itself, the former being as diametrically opposite to the genius of the gospel, as the latter is to the nature of man, and the moral government he is under; but a conquering the *corruption* of nature, and a change of its governing principles, its bias and inclination;

tion; or a subduing the power of sin, and bringing the whole soul under the dominion of grace, through the influence of the divine spirit.

To this end, infinite wisdom has adapted the means which are committed to the ministers of the gospel, with a peculiarly solemn charge to employ them with the greatest diligence and care. That is, they are charged

- 1st, To endeavour to convince their hearers of their moral and spiritual wretchedness, their ignorance and depravity; their distance from God, and their subjection to his wrath or just displeasure; for without this they will never so much as think, in earnest, about the blessings of the gospel, and the method of salvation fixed upon there.
2. Faithfully to represent to them, the person, offices, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the tender mercies of God in him!
3. To assure them of the determinate will of God to punish their disobedience in an eternal world, and that with an aggravation of misery, in proportion to the aggravation of their guilt.
4. To add their constant and fervent prayers for them, imploring the divine blessing upon the word, or the gracious power of God to

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carry it to the heart. And 5. To do all this constantly and perseveringly, with unremitting earnestness and vigour, notwithstanding all the many and great discouragements they must and will most certainly meet with, from the coldness, formality, spiritual sloth, and worldly dispositions of their hearers. And thus persuade them to come into a serious, cordial, and voluntary approbation of the way of mercy and salvation proposed in the gospel, viz. *repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, and a sincere devotion of soul to the will and service of God—to come into the church and fold of Christ, not only by external profession, but vital holiness.

And hast thou, O my soul, been thus compelled? Has the love of Christ constrained thee to the love of him? To free and genuine confession and repentance of sin; and devotion, solemn and hearty devotion, of all thy powers to God? Hast thou indeed been prevailed upon to fly for refuge to the hope set before thee in the gospel? Is Jesus become thy chosen redeemer and lord, thy righteousness and strength, thy dependance and hope?—Are the ways of evangelical religion and righteousness ways of pleasantness and peace to thee,

On Select Portions of SCRIPTURE. 29

in which it is thy choice and delight to walk ?
—Has the divine grace so subdued thy will,
so overcome its corruptions, that thou findest
thyself indeed under its holy dominion!—
Happy then, thrice happy, thy condition !
Go on in this serious course of faith, piety,
and holiness—and that Saviour, in whom
thou hast believed, will be found *able to save*
unto the uttermost ; and bring thee, and thy
body itself, spiritualized and refined, into that
world where he himself resides, to behold and
share in his glory !

Oft wisdom spread her board,
And call'd me to her feast,
As oft I turn'd the scornful ear,
Nor would become her guest.

And thus had still rebell'd,
And perish'd in my sin ;
Had not persuasive grace prevail'd,
And sweetly forc'd me in.

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MEDITATION VIII.

— *For his great love wherewith he loved us.*

Ephes. ii. 4.

THE LOVE OF GOD is the fountain from whence all human happiness is derived, and indeed the happiness of every creature from the lowest insect to the highest angel. It was this perfection of his nature that led him (if I may so speak) to make man after his own image, viz. to give that form to his body in which the SON OF GOD himself chose to appear, render it capable of being exalted even to the right hand of GOD, and of being filled with HIS FULLNESS; and to give to that body a spirit bearing a still nearer likeness to himself, in its intellectual powers, activity, immortality, and dominion over the inferior creatures on earth; and, what is still infinitely more, a likeness to himself, in wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and the other moral perfections of his adorable

ble nature, together with a capacity for those high and divine enjoyments that arise from a consciousness or inward sense of his favour, and the contemplation of his glory. All this is the effect of the love of God, these are the emanations of his infinite beneficence which he once shed upon his creature man.

But though much of the divine love thus appears in the original constitution of man, and the condition in which he at first existed; yet there are much more abundant and illustrious displays of it in the scheme of his redemption, and the great things God has done for him by Christ, and bestowed on him through him. Witness the gracious appointment of Christ to the great and important office of Mediator: his devoting him to the humbling circumstances of his incarnation, sufferings, and death.—The seasonable and early discovery of this gracious provision to our first parents after their fall, and to all of us when awakened to a just sense of our guilt and danger, and desirous of returning to God.—Witness also the kind and condescending manner in which he presses upon us the consideration of this goodness, viz. in declarations, promises, invitations, of the most tender

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der and extensive mercy;—his long suffering and patience, waiting for the effect of these measures upon us, striving with us by his holy spirit to attend to what so eminently belongs to our eternal peace.—And lastly, witness the *peculiarly tender regard* he pays to those who through his grace hear and obey his voice, bestowing upon them his counsels and his cares; granting them his special and most gracious presence in the duties of devotion, manifesting himself to them as he does not to the world; keeping them by his almighty and gracious power, while here on earth; and bringing them safe at last, to his heavenly kingdom and glory, where they shall be ever with him, see him as he is, and enjoy his love in a manner delightful beyond all the power of our present conceptions.

All these, and many other particulars of the like nature, shew with the most abundant evidence, the GREATNESS of the love of God, and its free and unchangeable nature.

And what a flame of divine affection then, should the consideration of these things raise in our breasts! What amiable excellencies do we see in the eternal JEHOVAH, when we see him thus forming and blessing his creature
man?

man? How infinitely more when we behold him reconciling a guilty world to himself by Jesus Christ! And how concerned should we be to feel the influence of those excellencies upon our hearts, to inspire us, as they naturally tend to do, with a cheerful hope in this God; animate us with a becoming zeal for his glory; and lead us to an entire rest in him, as our all-sufficient and everlasting portion! What encouragement is here for us to believe, that even the darkest and most afflictive dispensations of his providence will be productive of the most important good, and render more abundant our spiritual and eternal felicity!—Surely, nothing is to be dreaded from a being who even delights in mercy, by the soul that sees its own wretchedness, and seeks its happiness in him through faith in Christ Jesus. The God who is so abundant in goodness, and has said so much of it to lead us to repentance, and in obedient confidence in him, will never, never reject the humble sinner, desirous of returning to him, and enjoying his friendship.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION IX.

—*God be merciful to me a sinner.*

Luke xviii. 13.

IT is strange to find, that notwithstanding the notoriety of our demerit, we are so prone to value ourselves, even in the divine presence, upon some supposed moral worth and excellence about us, and to imagine that we have some sort of right to the favour of God and eternal life upon that account, without any regard to his gracious covenant, or the mediator of it. It is the design of the parable, of which the text above is a part, to shew us, among other things, that this disposition is entirely wrong, and unbecoming our real condition:—It shews us, that we are all become guilty before God, and depend upon his free and undeserved mercy for our forgiveness and acceptance;—and that as the *worst* of us *MAY*, so the *best* of us *MUST*, come to him with penitent acknowledgment

ledgment of our sins, casting ourselves upon his free and forfeited mercy, manifested through Jesus Christ, as our *only* hope.

The very frame and constitution of the gospel supposes us undone in ourselves, and unable to deliver our own souls;—its foundations are laid, not in the power and worthiness of man, but in the gracious purpose of God, and the infinite worth of the obedience and blood of Christ. And thus agreeably to the nature of our condition, and the genius of the gospel, he *calls upon all men to repent*; not, indeed, as the meritorious *reason* or *ground* of their pardon, but as the just and absolutely necessary qualification for the enjoyment of it.—*Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out; the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; we have redemption and forgiveness through it*, is the language of this dispensation; and it speaks this language to the most strict and blameless *pharisee*, as well as to the scandalous *publican*, unless he can prove himself entirely innocent, and plead a perfect righteousness. Were we not sinners, we should stand in no need of the gospel, nor the Saviour there declared; but *sinners* we certainly all, even the best of us, are, and therefore must

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must draw all our hope and comfort from the *grace* there discovered;—must draw nigh to God, in all our religious intercourse with him, as *sinners*, viz. as penitently sensible of his greatness and majesty, purity, and justice—of the malignity of sin, as infinitely offensive to his adorable perfections, miserably depraving all the powers of our nature, and subjecting us to a painful sense of his awful displeasure, both in this world and that which is to come;—and therefore approach him with unfeigned grief and shame, justifying him, and condemning ourselves;—referring ourselves entirely to his pure and undeserved *mercy* in Christ Jesus;—pleading with him his own gracious promises, putting our hope and trust in them;—acknowledging our obligations to the mediator with the warmest gratitude, and endeavouring to walk in newness of life.

In this way we have every possible reason, and the most abundant encouragement to hope for the favour of God. He assures us that he is MOST MERCIFUL—that he delights in the exercises of mercy—and that *when the sinner, of what character soever, forsakes his evil ways and thoughts, and turns unto him, HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM.* For this, Jesus
shed

shed his precious blood; for this he intercedes with the Father; and in this, as in every thing else, the Father hears him. Though I have nothing to plead but **MERCY**, and nothing better to say of myself than that I am a *sinner*; yet if I desire deliverance from my sins, from their power as well as guilt, I am assured of being heard, through the great Mediator.

Here then, my soul, cast thy anchor of hope; upon this rock rest thy expectation of the divine forgiveness, justification, and eternal life.—Endeavour to see and own, with a truly broken and contrite disposition, thy guilt and unworthiness; renounce all dependence on thy own righteousness, as utterly incapable of atoning the divine justice for even one of the least of thy transgressions, much less procuring thee eternal felicity. The *righteous Lord* loves righteousness in all his creatures; but, as reason and justice require, he prefers the gloriously perfect righteousness of his Son, and that alone, to the honour of delivering us from the condemnation of his law, and entitling us to his favour. Let me take care I do not pervert or confound that order of things the divine wisdom has established,

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blished, and expect to find the mercy I want for my own sake. I am a sinner; I therefore dare not think of approaching the great and holy God, as if I were not. No, my hope, my refuge, shall be his pure and undeserved mercy. Jesus shall be my trust, as my only mediator and redeemer. By him, the justice I have offended and dread, is fully satisfied—in him my eternal salvation is sure, while through the belief of this grace I live upon his infinite fulness as my portion, and to the glory of God by him as my end!

At awful distance, Lord,

I bow before thy throne;

Thy power and justice I adore,

And all my guilt I own.

But there my Jesus lives,

And bids me not despair;

In him I would thy mercy seek,

Nor doubt to find it there.

MEDITA.

MEDITATION X.

— *But cleave unto the Lord your God.*

Joshua xxiii. 8.

THESE words contain the substance of the dying charge which that great and good man *Joshua* gave to the children of *Israel*; and comprise in them matter of the highest importance to *all* that call themselves the people of God, and profess a subjection to his authority and government, whether they have made that profession in more or less solemn forms;—they imply a duty, that it is their interest to attend to, with the greatest care and diligence.

It is here evidently supposed, that even they who had entered into the most solemn engagements with their God, would be tempted to withdraw their hearts from him, and sit too loose to those engagements. — The pleasures of the world; the customs and maxims that prevail in it; the hatred and scorn, or solicitations of their neighbours and

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acquaintance; the prospects of the gain, or the fear of the loss of the possessions of the world; and, I may add, the coldness and formality of many of the professors of religion themselves, would all conspire to draw them from their better purposes, and too often break in upon their most solemn engagements to the SUPREME BEING. To these temptations the invifible adversary, the grand TEMPTER, may be suffered to add the secret influence of his malice and subtlety over the powers of imagination; nor will the corrupt tendencies of our own natures, our ignorance and folly, our intemperate self-love, attachments to the world, and the *evil heart of unbelief*, or distrust of the divine power and goodness be wanting, to add to the danger of our situation, and lead us to *depart from the living God*.

To the gross idolatry, indeed, into which the *Israelites* were in danger of falling, *we* are not likely to be tempted. But there are other idols than those of wood and stone, and other kinds of idolatry than paying divine homage to graven images. Though we declare our belief of the one living and true God ever so zealously and frequently, and make a solemn

lemn parade of worshipping him; yet if we really set our hearts upon any thing *more* than upon God;—if he has not the inward reverence, love, and confidence of our souls, above the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world, and all our dearest delights in it, we do not *give him the glory due to his name*, we do not *cleave to him*.—And yet where is the man that can look deliberately into his heart, and compare the workings of its affections with the obligations of duty here, but must acknowledge his many failings as to the past, and his great danger as to the future, and consequently the propriety of the exhortation, of *cleaving to the Lord his God*?—That is of so regarding him as —

To make him the supreme object of our religious worship, the worship of the heart;—approach him in that particular manner, that *new and living way*, which he has appointed us, through the precious blood and intercession of his dear Son;—submit entirely to all the dispensations of his providence, however painful and afflictive;—trust assuredly in his word, his truth and faithfulness, power and goodness; — set our affections upon him, as our best and most delightful portion;—and make

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it our sincere endeavour to *walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.*

To pay the Almighty this regard, thus cleave to him in faith, and love, and holy obedience; we are under every conceivable obligation, for HE IS THE LORD OUR GOD. —He is possessed of every excellence and perfection, and therefore justly claims, and justly deserves these regards. —He also stands in the nearest and most endearing relation to us, as the maker of our frame, the father of our spirits, the spring of all our real comforts and delights. —He has bestowed his love upon us, given his dearly-beloved Son to suffer and die for us, and through him is become the God of our salvation, and promises to be our everlasting portion. — *We also are his people.* —We have owned his right over us, and his claim to our best affections, and the entire devotion of our souls to him; —we have taken HIS name upon us, and called him OUR GOD; —we have bound ourselves to him by the most solemn vows, and called heaven and earth to witness that we would cleave to him, and be for ever his. —And thus, to cleave to him is to cleave to our own happiness, and to be sure of being for ever with him, and
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he with us, OUR GOD for ever.—But to draw back from him, and forsake his ways, would be to incur the most shocking and complicated guilt, and plunge our souls into the deepest perdition. Thus, in a word, our present comfort, our future and everlasting felicity, our reason, our consciences, every thing serious and sacred, conspire to enforce this important duty upon all that *call upon the name of the Lord*, and make any pretence to religion, Oh! that my heart may feel the animating power of this exhortation, and the many reasons that support it, and *cleave*, indeed, *to the Lord my God!*

Why is my heart so far from thee,
My God, my chief delight?
Why are my thoughts no more by day
With thee, no more, by night?

Why should my foolish passions rove,
Where can such sweetness be,
As may be tasted in thy love,
As may be found with thee?

WATTS.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XI.

I have set the LORD always before me—

Psal. xvi. 8.

THIS was the language of *David*, and that not only with respect to himself, but to the great *Messiah* also, in whom the words were more eminently fulfilled; for HE, in the stricted sense, *set the LORD always before him*. And this, more or less, is the case of all the faithful and obedient followers of Christ, who partake of his spirit, and act upon the same principles; they also, in their degree, and so far as his grace prevails in them, *set the Lord always before them*.

Some notion of a Supreme Being even most of the heathens have always entertained: but their notions of him have been very obscure and inconsistent. We, who enjoy a brighter discovery of him, have generally more clear and consistent ideas of God. But even amongst

amongst us, there are but few, comparatively, who *set the LORD always before them*. But this regard to GOD, and sense of his presence, enters into the character of every good man, in the evangelical sense of the word, and is essential to it; that is—he endeavours to get clear and just ideas of GOD—such as may impress his heart, and effectually engage him in his service—fill him with an holy fear and reverence of him, kindle in him a pure and supreme love to him; animate his obedience, encourage his hope, comfort his conscience, and take him off from any undue attachments to this world, to which he will be tempted. In a word, he endeavours to *realize* to his mind the being and perfections of GOD, to bring the sense of them near to his heart, and live always under their influence.

To this end it is necessary to conceive properly of GOD, or entertain a right idea of him; that is, to conceive of him as we are taught in his word;—as, though a most holy and just GOD, of almighty power, and uncontrollable authority, yet of infinite *goodness and mercy*. Or, as the prophet emphatically expresses it, a *just GOD, and a Saviour*.

In

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In order to this, we must behold him as he manifesteth himself in *Christ*, reconciling the world to himself by his obedience, death, and intercession.

Without this medium of considering the eternal Majesty, we could not, as guilty creatures, bear even the thought of him without the most alarming apprehensions, if we were not absolutely stupid. To all such, while such they resolve to be, *our God is a consuming fire*; whom, instead of setting before us as the object of our choice, our confidence and delight, as the text intends, we should be glad to banish from our thoughts and apprehensions for ever. It is in *JESUS* we see God in an amiable and desirable light. But as he has revealed himself to us in this son of his love, it is our indispensable duty, and our highest interest, to *set him always before us*. For this will be a most effectual means of preserving us from the prevailing power of temptation, and preventing our falling into sin; of animating us in all the various duties of life, supporting us under its afflictions, and of enabling us to look upon death and the eternal world with composure and even delight.

Let

Let me then endeavour to learn who and what God is, from the representations that he has given of himself in his holy word. — Let me consider him, though awfully just, yet reconciled in *Christ*. Though *the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, yet condescending to dwell with him who is of an humble and contrite heart*. — In a word, let me consider him as the great author of my being, the father of my spirit, who, though justly resenting my sins, is yet ready to forgive them, when I penitently seek him, through faith in his son. Thus, while it is my duty, it will be my *delight, to set the Lord always before me*. I shall think of him with pleasure; I shall love to realize the thought of his presence with me, and bring it near to my heart. And thus I shall fear to sin against him, shall delight to serve him; make his faithfulness, power, and mercy, my perpetual confidence, and rejoice continually in him, until I *see him as he is*, in the light of the eternal world, without one moment's darkness to intercept the blissful vision.

 MEDITATION XII.

Then Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Acts viii. 5.

HAPPY Samaritans!—Though when our Lord was upon earth, they worshipped they knew not what, and were now bewitched with the religious juggles and forceries of Simon Magus; yet happy to have CHRIST preached unto them!—CHRIST the anointed of the FATHER, appointed to be his salvation to the ends of the earth, as one *able* and willing to *save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him*;—to be instructed in the doctrine, person, offices, and fulness of Christ; his humiliation, in becoming the son of man; his sufferings, crucifixion, and death, as a sacrifice for sin;—his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God;—the efficacy of his righteousness and spirit, the unsearchable riches of his grace, the greatness of his love, and the triumphs of his power.—

These

These were the chief themes of the apostles discourses; the glad-tidings they brought to sinful men;—these they took particular pains to display, and urge upon the attention of their hearers.

From hence they took occasion to call them to repentance, faith, and obedience, — shewing the peculiarly strong and endearing obligations they were under to these duties, from this view of the divine benevolence;—adding, moreover, the awful and even tremendous consequences of rejecting these glad-tidings, and persisting in their sins in contempt of this mercy.

And what a wise and well-adapted scheme of religion is this! How honourable to the DEITY! How necessary, salutary, purifying, and delightful to us!—Hast thou, my soul, ever felt the real quickening power of it? Is THIS CHRIST indeed thy SAVIOUR? Wounded with a sense of thy sins, hast thou ever found the healing virtue of his most precious blood? Polluted and depraved as thou art, hast thou indeed been washed in this fountain, and restored to evangelical rectitude and goodness!

The Samaritans embraced, and rejoiced in this blessed news of salvation by Christ.—

F

Thousands

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Thousands in Great-Britain despise it.—They had rather hear of any thing than of such a Saviour.—They wish for happiness, but they will not apply to Christ, and trust in him for it; they desire not the knowledge of him or his ways.—They are so blinded with their own righteousness, as to see no need of his; or so in love with their sins, as to choose rather to continue *in* them, than be saved *from* them.—*Simon Magus* himself could not more fatally and effectually deceive the poor *Samaritans*, than these unhappy creatures deceive themselves!—Oh! that all who pretend to minister the word of life, would lay aside their speculative disputes, and party notions, and set themselves to preach *Christ crucified, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.*—We might then hope to see dying religion revive, and the gospel become indeed, *the power of God to salvation!*

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XIII.

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. John xiv. 21.

IT is suprising to observe, that though the great teacher of our divine religion makes so great account of the practical part, there should be so many of his pretended followers, who make little or no account of it at all ; but seem to think, if they call themselves by the name of Christ, and especially if they add to this, some particular zeal about the mere appendages and external rites of Christianity, or modes of faith, that they do all that is necessary ; — that they love the Saviour, and demonstrate that love very sufficiently. He himself, however, is of a very different mind, and tells us plainly, — that it is he only who *has and keeps his commands*, that loves him indeed, and in truth. — That is he who is really and seriously sensible of his obligations to Christ for his great love to him. — The love of all who

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love the LORD JESUS in sincerity, arises from a believing view of his excellencies—as God *manifest in our flesh*, humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death of the cross for them, out of pure benevolence; as possessed of all the amiableness of the most perfect moral character in himself; and as doing the greatest and most generous acts of kindness to them. — And this divine affection, thus founded in the love of Christ, will shew itself in our keeping his commandments; particularly, in studiously considering what they are, their extent and importance—endeavouring to impress our minds with a due sense of their excellency — living daily under their influence — cherishing that influence continually in our hearts, and extending our regards to the whole of the divine will, so far as it is known to us.

This shews our love to Christ, as the effect shews the cause; and is so absolutely necessary in his estimation, that nothing else, not even the whole apparatus of religious rites and observances, will avail to this purpose.

O my God! suffer me not to impose upon myself by mere pretensions of love to thee; and my Blessed Saviour! suffer me not to rest
in

in any thing under that name, that has no foundation in a conviction of thy excellencies, no influence upon my heart and life in favour of true religion and virtue!—And, oh pity and forgive all my manifold failings, both in respect of my love and my obedience! I am ashamed to think with what coldness I have treated THEE, thou BEST OF BEINGS! How little regard I have paid to those perfections, that inspire the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, with ineffable delight and rapture! and how poor and imperfect the best and fairest fruits of my warmest affections are!—Give me, I beseech thee, such a sense of my obligations to thee, and my once dying Redeemer, as may give new life to all the powers of my nature!—Let my heart feel, INDEED, the vital warmth, the animating energy of thy love manifested in thy Son!—Inspired with this, I shall run the ways of thy commandments with more alacrity and pleasure. —I shall cleave to my Saviour with more sensible satisfaction;—live more above the influence of all the low, and little, trifling objects of my affection, which this world is continually tempting me with, and aspire to that perfection of love and purity,

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of righteousness and joy, which thou hast insured in a better world, to all that sincerely love thee in this.

Mistaken souls ! that dream of heaven,
And make their empty boast
Of inward joys and sins forgiven,
While they are slaves to lust.

Vain are our fancies airy flights,
If faith be cold and dead ;
None but a living power unites
To Christ the living head.

When from the curse he sets us free,
He makes our natures clean,
Nor would he ever come to be
The minister of sin.

WATTS.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XIV.

*As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so
walk ye in him.* Col. ii. 6.

IT is an easy matter to become Christians, if calling ourselves by the name of Christ, and professing a general assent to his doctrine be all; or even a speculative skill in disputing about the truth of the gospel, and a flaming zeal for some peculiarities that happen to strike our fancy, and make for our favourite party. — But to live upon the grace and righteousness of the Redeemer, and the love of God in him, as the spring of our sweetest consolations; — to obey, as well as believe, from the heart the form of sound words — to walk in Christ Jesus the Lord, in which the real power of Christianity, and its true characteristic consisteth; this is not so easy, but requires great care and watchfulness, pains and labour, as well as great grace.

To walk in Christ, is — to cleave to his doctrine, and maintain it in its genuine simplicity;

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plicity;—to follow his example, in his constancy and fervency in devotion, his universal benevolence, his sincerity and faithfulness in every office, trust, and relation, and his self-denying virtues of meekness, humility, temperance, patience, and just contempt of this world;—to depend on his spirit and power, for the supplies of grace which we constantly need, and exercise our hope in his promises;—promises that refer us to spiritual enjoyments in a future world. This is to walk in Christ; and thus to maintain our regards to *Jesus Christ the Lord*; thus to believe and live under the influence of his religion, is the point we should endeavour to keep in view. For, indeed, without some good evidence of our thus receiving the doctrine and grace of Christ, and thus bringing forth the fruits of it, we cannot justly-claim the high and divine character of Christians; nor have any solid, rational, and scriptural title to the glorious privileges annexed to it.

Take heed, therefore, O my soul, thou dost not deceive thyself here.—Here, it is much to be feared, numbers do deceive themselves, and are undone.—Remember, there is no walking in Christ without receiving him; there

there can be no saving reception of him, without this effect, at least disposition thus to walk in him; no true and genuine morality (according to the dispensation we are under) but what springs from this grace and faith in him; — nor can there be any true and genuine faith, where the heart feels no practical influence from the things believed. Be it thy care, thy reigning care then, not to separate what God has joined, but to find them more firmly and fully united: to embrace the doctrine of Christ with a more lively and vigorous faith, and evidence that faith to thyself and the world, by the steadiness and constancy, the extent and growing perfection of thy obedience. Nothing can be more inconsistent than to profess to receive the doctrine of Christ, as divinely true and important, and yet live in contradiction to it, *walking after the course of this world with the children of disobedience*: it is trifling with the most affecting obligations and motives to holiness, treating him with the basest ingratitude, and doing the greatest injury to thy own immortal interest.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XV.

I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

Psal. ii. 6.

THE kingdom of Christ is the chief subject of the Bible. — The description of his person and excellencies, the plan of his government, the many instances in which it has from time to time been executed, are there opened to our view in a vast variety of particulars, which spread a glory over the whole of that divine book.

The royal authority of Christ is here to be considered as respecting his subordinate character, and the peculiar office and business of mediator between God and man, an honour which the Father confers upon him; and which is elsewhere spoken of as founded in his humiliation, and the glorious reward of it. Phil. ii. 9.

The subjects of this kingdom are, all the creatures of God in general, over whom he exercises a common providence; or, his believing obedient people in particular, over whom

whom he exercises a more special and gracious providence. — He governs the whole world, but even that government is particularly directed for the benefit of his people and the accomplishment of his designs concerning their eternal Life.

The principal agent in this kingdom of Christ, is the DIVINE SPIRIT as our Instructor, Sanctifier, Comforter; the holy *angels* also are *ministring spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation*, upon many important occasions:—Wise, and good, and great *men* are employed too in this service; the one called by grace to teach the true religion, and direct the affairs of the church; the other by Divine Providence, to protect the rights and privileges of society, and preserve the good order of the world. And even *wicked men and devils* are sometimes made use of as instruments, in the hand of this great Sovereign of all, to execute his purposes; he over-rules their malice and envy, their mischievous power, and infernal subtlety, to accomplish the designs of his infinite wisdom.

Here we see a great deal of the faithfulness of God, in making good his engagements with Christ; supporting him through
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all his unparalleled sufferings, raising him from the dead, setting him at his own right hand, crowning him with honour and glory, and putting all things under his feet: the evidence of which we have in the miracles that have been wrought in confirmation of the *truth* of the gospel, and the salutary and surprising effects of its ministration. And thus we learn to trust God too, and assure ourselves that he will make good all his promises and engagements to us.—

Here we are also taught, that the road to celestial honours often runs through the dark vale of humiliation, and the most painful self-denial.

None ever suffered such indignities, or lay under such various and accumulated contempt and scorn, as the Lord Jesus; and none were ever raised to such magnificence and glory. Let me then patiently bear reproach for his sake, nor think much at any ignominy that may be cast on my character, for my regards to his name and honour.—Let no meanness of condition afflict me, while I can hope upon gospel grounds, that I have a part in his royal favour and friendship, and am indeed a joint heir with him of the riches
and

and glory of his kingdom. While so powerful and gracious a sovereign holds the reins of universal empire ; while the *very Jesus* that died upon a cross for the salvation of sinners, is the Lord, that reigns over all created nature, *the Jesus* who, I trust, has loved *me*, and given himself for *me* ; I have the utmost reason to be easy and satisfied with every thing that befalls me, though ever so afflictive and distressing. I have nothing to fear, while, by humble and obedient faith, I live under his protection. I have nothing that I *ought* to wish for or desire, but he can and will bestow upon me.—If I am found in that way of duty he has appointed me, he will provide in a better manner for all my bodily wants and temporal necessities, than I could possibly do myself. And while he thus takes care of my happiness in this world, he has also promised to take care of it in the next. In this gracious care I would therefore rest. To his sovereign authority I would bow ; and in the hope of being for ever with him in his kingdom of glory, I would always rejoice.



MEDITATION XVI.

—*The love of Christ constraineth us.*—

2 Cor. v. 14.

NO subject more interesting or delightful than the *love of Christ* — nothing more deeply impressed the apostle's mind, nothing should more deeply impress ours. It is the sum and substance, the life and soul of all true religion. The discoveries of it in the sacred writings, are the most illuminating, quickening, purifying, comforting discoveries the Deity ever made, or will make, to man in this world. The blessings it has procured for us, are of the highest and most interesting importance, and rendered to us in the freest and most gracious manner.

This love is entirely disinterested, pure benevolence; and what has no parallel amongst the children of men. The instances in which it is expressed, particularly the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ, are amazing even

even to angels!—A thousand things most glorious to the divine perfections, most awful and alarming, salutary and delightful to us; — things that tend to mortify our pride, and all our corruptions, to heal our wounded consciences, and inspire us with the lively hopes of immortal bliss, and actually insure its enjoyments, are comprised in the *love of Christ*.

No wonder then it is so constraining; — no wonder it prevails on such numbers (would to God they were greater!) to forsake their evil ways, and turn unto the Lord with their whole hearts, and engage their warmest affections to him as the supreme good.—It is impossible to believe, and contemplate seriously, the glorious character of the Divine Redeemer as exhibited in the gospel;—to see him humbling himself to live in our world, and pouring out his vital blood an offering for our sins, and not feel something of its sacred power and energy; or without being brought over to the sincere love of God, and obedience to his will.

The wonder is, that any one can read and think of these things, and in some sense even believe them, and not feel their constraining influence!

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If, therefore, we would seek the reason of our shameful coldness and indifference to the Saviour, remissness in duty, attachment to this world, and inattention to another, it may be found in our ignorance of Christ, and insensibility of the power of his redeeming love.—We have not thoroughly entered into the amiable excellencies, the glorious benevolence of the Saviour, so fully as we ought to have done. May the Blessed Spirit pour his divine light into our understandings, and *take of the things that are Christ's, and shew them unto us!* May he quicken our benumbed powers, by impressing our hearts with the love of the Lord Jesus! — May we find a growing experience of its efficacy, to cheer and sanctify our affections, and lead us to centre our wishes and hopes in those high enjoyments of it, which he has promised us in another and better world, where we shall see it in all its glory!

MEDITATION XVII.

*Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his
trust.* Psal. xl. 4.

THE condition of human nature is so dependent, that we feel it more or less continually; and, therefore, are continually looking out for some assistance; casting ourselves upon almost every thing that comes in our way, and seems but to promise us the least succour or support.—We carry about with us an opinion, that happiness is somewhere not in ourselves; and as riches, power, and pleasure strike us most readily and feelingly with the specious shew of happiness, we generally fix our attention there, and there make at least our first trials. Experience, perhaps, soon convinces us, that we have mistaken the point, and have been imposed on by false appearances.—We turn our eyes to religion; but even there the first things that usually strike us, are the externals, or forms of godliness, of various kinds, to which the re-

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ligious prejudices or weakneſſes of mankind have given a kind of ſanction ; — the warm and pleaſing deluſions of an enthuſiaſtic fancy ; — the gloomy and ſplenetic ſeverities of ſuperſtitious melancholy ; — the cold and inſipid round of duty, that ſatiſfies the indolent ; — the furious zeal of the opinionated bigot ; — or the party-coloured, earthly-minded devotion of thoſe who are deſirous of ſerving both God and *Mammon* ; — ſome one, or more, or all of theſe, juſt as it happens to ſuit our taſte or caſt of mind, captivate our hearts, and become the idol of our confidence, and ground of our hope of happineſs. — So vain a thing is man, without the divine guidance !

But in oppoſition, and infinite ſuperiority to all theſe, the Pſalmiſt declares, that *that* man, and he only, is truly bleſſed, who *makes the Lord his truſt*. And very juſtly ; for, as we elſewhere read, in the LORD *there is everlaſting ſtrength*. — With him are unfading riches and honour, grace and glory, and every good thing. — He is able to help in every time of need ; and is gracious and merciful to give that help to all that ſeek it, and truſt in him for it, in the way of their duty.

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The man, therefore, that renounces all other confidence, as to his ultimate hope of happiness;—looks to GOD, as reconciled through Christ;—is so persuaded of the power and goodness of GOD, as to commit himself and all his concerns to him, hoping in him for the accomplishment of his gracious promises;—he is the happy man indeed. For, by having his soul thus determined to that greatest and best of BEINGS, he has the clearest evidence that his religious pretensions are genuine—leads others by his example to go and do likewise;—is best prepared for all events, and knows how to make the best use of them;—enjoys all his delights with the highest satisfaction possible;—is preserved from sinking under trials, or falling by temptation;—maintains the life and vigour of all his graces and virtues the most effectually;—meets death with the firmest composure, and most assured expectation of eternal life;—and, which crowns all, *shall not be disappointed.*

Not so the men of this world, who have their portion in this life. They cannot even think of death in earnest, without distress and terror. It is to them the dreadful enemy, threatening everlasting destruction to all their joys.

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joys. They meet it, if not with the inattention and stupidity of the most dangerous delusion, with the most alarming dread of the consequence; — shrink back at the fearful darkness before them, catch hold of every flattering hope, though ever so feeble;—till at last the awful power prevails, and drags their reluctant and affrighted souls before the tribunal of the Almighty!

Let us not, therefore, any longer call them blessed that *know not the Lord*, and have not *made him their trust*. Let us no longer suffer ourselves to be dazzled with the glare of the false pleasures of the world, or of mere external and partial religion: but, with a serious sense of the utter insufficiency of every creature to make us happy, let us make the **ETERNAL GOD** *our confidence*. — His wisdom will be then our guide, his power our protection, and the light of his countenance our consolation now, and our joy to all eternity; for, *blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust*.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XVIII.

Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy GOD ; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isa. xli. 10.

THE whole consolation of the gospel is comprised in these divine words ; grace and glory, all the good we want in time and eternity ; all the blessings of the new and gracious covenant, are here. A *present* GOD, as *our* GOD ; and with such sinful creatures ; what amazing condescension and goodness is this ! — it implies, complete salvation made over to us ; — that GOD is, indeed, reconciled in *Christ* ; and though a *just* GOD, yet also a *Saviour*. But to whom are these words spoken ? — not to the obstinate and impenitent ; at least no further than as means to awaken and draw them to repentance — but to the enlightened, awakened, distressed sinner,

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ner, who feels his sin and misery, and desires above all things to be reconciled to God;—to all such they are more immediately and particularly addressed, as a means of support in present distress, preparation for the future, and assurance of complete deliverance from all at last. Hereby the wisdom, power, love, and all the perfections of Deity, the virtue of the Redeemer's blood, and the grace of the Divine Spirit, are engaged in their favour.

What reason, what abundant reason then, have all such as hate their sins, and seek deliverance from them indeed, to dismiss all their anxious, weak, distrustful fears, and to sit down in every condition of life, though ever so afflictive, with this heart-reviving conclusion;—My God, my gracious father, and best friend, is here; here to help, to support, to strengthen, and, in his due time, to deliver me;—to ensure me of complete victory and triumph over all my spiritual enemies, all the evils of life, and even death itself. — Yes, the ALL-SUFFICIENT AND MOST GRACIOUS GOD is present with me with this kind design—Oh! what unutterable consolation is this!—While I can look

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to such a near, almighty helper; while JEHOVAH is my sun and my shield, my light and my salvation;—while I can feel my soul cleaving to him, can realize his love and power, and rest upon his sacred word,—why should I fear what man, or all the powers of hell and darkness can do against me! With such a text as this in my Bible, how is it that I am so apt to despond, and sink under my burdens?—to start at every little difficulty, and almost draw back from my duty, terrified by the appearances of danger.—Is not the almighty God *with me*, to strengthen and save me?—Is not *his* word to be depended upon, as the most sure and unchanging verity?—If there be not support and consolation *here*, where is it possible to be found? Let me then be continually with God in prayer, praise, meditation, watchfulness, and HE will be continually with *me*;—let me humbly and dutifully rely upon HIM, and he will *never leave me nor forsake me*; but guide me by his counsels, and at last receive me to his glory. Oh! that I could live more by faith on these consolating words, and patiently wait for the salvation of God!

MEDITA-

 MEDITATION XIX.

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do
justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with
thy God?* Mic. vi. 8.

HOW much is the goodness and conde-
scension of the ever-blessed God to be
admired and adored!—Had we been left to
our own wisdom, to find out the grand expe-
dient of restoring us to our God, and to our
happiness, what could we have done? What
method could we possibly have thought of?—
especially while we kept these two great truths
in our view, viz. that God is most holy and
righteous; and that we are extremely vile
and unworthy: what, in all the compass of
human thought, could have answered to these
truths, or have done sufficient honour to the
divine rectitude, as concerned in the govern-
ment of the world, and delivered our con-
sciences from their reasonable and just fears?
Should we think of offering to the DEITY
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the most rich and numerous sacrifices?—These were all his before, and could have no excellency in them worthy of his acceptance upon such an occasion;—or even the first born of our bodies, the dearest partners of our own flesh and blood?—This would be an abomination in his sight.—We might think of repentance and reformation of life, but what could this do towards repairing the wrongs we have done to the rectoral wisdom and holiness of so *great a BEING*?—This repentance would be imperfect at best, and the more, as wanting the proper motives to it from divine revelation, and the assurance of forgiveness.

The obedience and death indeed, of such a person as the Son of God, we might reasonably think adequate to the point in question;—but how could we know God had such a son?—or, if we could, we should be at a loss to know which way he should become such a sacrifice as the case required, unless God himself should inform us.

Blessed, therefore, for ever blessed be his name, that he has made this discovery!—pointed us to the Lamb, that takes away the sin of the world!—shewn us the nature and

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excellency of his sacrifice; and how, and which way, we are to expect a saving interest in it; even by attending to, and believing in, the revelation he has been pleased to make of his gracious mind concerning it; and, in consequence of that, doing *justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God*; viz. paying such a regard to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow-creatures, as he requires of us; humbly depending upon the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit to enable us to do so; and humbly referring ourselves to the Great Redeemer's mediation and worthiness for our acceptance, and the reward of eternal life. This is the sum of what he has shewn us. Oh how *good* in him, to make so necessary and effectual a provision for our happiness, and discover it so clearly to us! — How reasonable and fit in us to embrace it with gratitude and joy, as the consolation and life of our souls! — and how surely to be depended upon, for the answering that most valuable and important end!

Strange! that we, who are undone without this goodness of God, should be no more affected with it; and that it should produce so little of that love to him which he demands!

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Let us take heed, lest this awful, this delightful discovery of the majesty and mercy of God, does not rise up in the judgment to come against us, and condemn us! for heavy indeed must that sentence of condemnation fall, which men draw upon themselves, by loving darkness rather than light;—the light that shews them a reconciled God, and leads them to immortal life and glory, through a reconciling JESUS!

By the dim light of nature led,
In search of bliss I stray,
Forlorn, 'till heavenly grace descends,
And points me out the way.

While her more glorious light I hail,
Her dictates I'll pursue;
Be *just* to all, and *mercy*, where
I see the wretched, shew.

But humbly on my God, I'll still
Rely, his grace to give;
And hope for pardon, thro' his Son,
While o'er my sins I grieve.

MEDITATION XX.

— *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come* —

Acts xxiv. 25.

THERE is a principle in all men, that pleads the cause of religion and virtue, sometimes at least; and though miserably blinded and stupified by sin, and borne down by the pride and corrupt passions of the heart, it will occasionally exert its power and authority to chastise the sinner. Hence very few can think of *living*, much less of *dying*, without some pretences to religion, and some purposes of repentance. Artful and designing men are particularly aware of this, and take the advantage it gives them, to lead their hearers into such notions and practices as best suit with their views, and may most effectually impose upon them. Instead therefore of *reasoning about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, they harangue upon topics better adapted to the superstitious taste and

prejudices of mankind; and very often take great pains to degrade *reason*, and exclaim, not only against the *abuse*, but even the *use* of it in the concerns of religion; as if, because some have exalted human reason above divine revelation, it was necessary to degrade it even below the instinct of brutes.

But we see the *apostles*, those truly serious preachers of the divine word, choose to *reason the case* with such as they would lead to Christ, and his holy religion.—They address their understandings and consciences, not their superstitious prejudices, and weak imaginations;—endeavour to convince and persuade them of the greatness of the evil of sin, and the infinite danger that attends a continuance in it; and so lead them to a solid and rational hope in CHRIST, as the *only* and all-sufficient deliverer from both. And from the topics suggested in our text, *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, they may find a rich abundance of matter for the purpose.

By the word *righteousness* here, we are led into a view of the absolutely perfect *rectitude* of the Divine Nature; or, to consider the great and blessed God as a BEING of spotless purity and uprightness; *righteous in all his*

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ways, and help in all his works; our sovereign Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge:—to consider ourselves as under the most sacred obligations to universal righteousness, or perfect obedience to the will of God; and yet as shamefully deficient in it, and righteously exposed to the dreadful resentments of the divine justice. And thus we are led to see the need of a *Mediator*, and the infinite worth and dignity, perfection and suitability, of that RIGHTEOUSNESS of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, arising from his entire obedience to his father's will, even to the death of the cross. A RIGHTEOUSNESS, manifested under such circumstances, and with such discoveries of the divine resentment against sin, as gives us the most alarming ideas of the justice of God, and his resolution to punish sin; and with such displays of the divine compassion to sinful man, as affords the most affecting motives to repentance, and the most solid ground for hope.

The doctrine and laws of *temperance* also, are so reasonable in themselves, so worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, so salutary to us, and so necessary to even our present happiness; and all enforced so strongly by the example of our Lord Jesus, as to afford

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us, on the one hand, very serious evidence of our guilty deficiencies; and on the other, very powerful arguments for our repentance and return to our duty.

All these considerations are brought home to our hearts with awakening power, and enforced with awful energy, by the consideration of the JUDGMENT TO COME! for, it is the *judgment* of that great BEING who gave us existence, and upholds us in it; and who, possessed of infinite perfections, has an indisputable right to govern us:—it will be *strict*; entering into every circumstance of our characters, and reaching the most secret thoughts of our hearts:—it will be also *universal*, and respect every individual of mankind; *all*, both *small and great*, from the greatest prince to the meanest slave:—it will be *final*, and without appeal; and be attended with consequences infinitely happy, indeed, to the righteous; but, to every finally impenitent sinner, beyond all description terrible, and yet every way inevitable!

Surely, nothing in all the world can be more justly alarming to a guilty creature's mind, than such an interview with his maker, the great and eternal God; nothing better adapted

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adapted to awaken his reasonable fears, and convince him of the necessity of repentance and faith in Christ, than the thought of appearing before the ALMIGHTY, sitting in judgment upon his soul; a judgment, that, without his repentance, shall consign him to the most fearful and remediless perdition! How dangerous then, may we justly reason, must it be to provoke the displeasure of this very JUDGE, by wilful continuance in known sins!—And, at a tribunal so awful as this, how vain and foolish must those excuses appear, with which the sinner now so easily imposes on his own deluded conscience! But how happy for him, that his JUDGE still continues to warn him of his danger, and invite him to his mercy!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXI.

—*Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.* ACTS xxiv. 25.

THE force of religion upon the minds of men is sometimes extremely evident, even where there are no saving effects produced by it; and the most wicked and abandoned are often compelled to acknowledge its capital and leading truths, at the very time they resolve to act in direct contradiction to them. This was the case of that wicked and unhappy governor *Felix*; and it is the case of thousands amongst us. The close reasoning, and warm address of the apostle, upon the interesting subjects of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, so penetrated the conscience of this hardened transgressor, this daring profligate in exalted life, that he discovered the greatest emotions of concern and fear; implying, in the strongest manner, the sense of his guilt, and the most alarming apprehensions of the consequences. And yet,
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instead of acting agreeably to these convictions, and desiring the apostle to inform him *what he should do to be saved*; how he might be delivered from the power of his sins, and find pardon and acceptance with God, he desires him, though in the most respectful manner, to withdraw; and endeavours to disguise the real sentiments of his heart, by promising to send for him again at some more *convenient season*. Thus giving at once the strongest testimony, next to real repentance, to the justness of the apostle's reasoning, and the divinity of his doctrine; and tacitly confessing the prevailing depravity of his own heart, and his determined aversion to the practice of true religion. His conscience told him he was wrong, and that the consequence of persisting in his wickedness must be to the last degree tremendous: but his vicious inclinations and appetites; his love of the pleasures of sin; his attachment to this world; his fear of the reproaches and ridicule of his friends and companions in sin; and, perhaps, his flattering himself that he might repent by and by, at some more favourable juncture, all conspired to oppose the pleas and remonstrances of conscience.

conscience, and to induce him to act in the foolish and inconsistent manner he did.

Happy would it be for mankind, if this was the only instance of such extreme folly and wickedness. But, alas! it is to be feared this is the case with numbers. They hear of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*;—their reason and consciences are convinced of the truth and importance of what those words imply;—they are convinced that they are sinners; that they must give an account of themselves to God *the judge of all*; that their condition in the future and eternal world depends upon their prevailing temper and character in this;—that what God has testified concerning his son Jesus, and the necessity of a penitent and obedient faith in him, is *true*; and that the mercy *that way* revealed to them is worthy of all acceptance;—and yet after all, they resolve still to continue in their unrighteousness and intemperance, and to indulge themselves in every desire of their depraved hearts, within their reach, in spite of all those convictions, and in the very face of the JUDGMENT OF GOD, threatening them with everlasting destruction from his presence; at best only flatter-

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tering themselves with answering to those convictions, and flying from the dreadful consequences of the divine judgment, by repentance, at some more agreeable season yet to come. Shocking delusion! How strongly evidential of the depravity of the human nature, its blindness, weakness, and aversion to pure religion and evangelical virtue; and consequently of the indispensable necessity of the divine grace to enlighten and purify, subdue and change the heart, and give a different bias to all its governing powers! And what a mercy is it that this grace is free, to all that see their need of it, and seek it in the way pointed out in the gospel! For there we are told, that we are not more ready to *give good gifts* to those most near and dear to us, than our *heavenly Father his holy spirit to them that ask it*; and that *whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely*.

As means leading us to the actual enjoyment of this grace, it is of the first consequence, that we are thankful to God for such convictions;—that we fall in with them, cherish them, and follow their light, as leading us to Christ; that we endeavour to remember, and bear it upon our minds, that our

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REASON and CONSCIENCES are immortal powers, and plead the cause of God and religion, of virtue and happiness;—and that, however overborne for the present by the solicitations of our corrupted passions, and the temptations of the world, they will prevail at last, and bear down all opposition, and God himself approve and confirm their plea; if not in *mercy* in *this world*, most certainly in *judgment* in the *next*.——To these considerations and endeavours should be added, the daily and serious study of the Bible, and constant prayer to God, in the name of the Lord Jesus, pleading with him his gracious promises, and trusting in them.

And who can think any pains too great in such a case as this? Especially when he considers the infinite worth of his soul, and its immortal interest; the short and uncertain duration of the pleasures of sin; how degrading to his nature; how fruitful of misery in this world, and how utterly ruinous in the next. And when he considers how truly amiable that virtue is, which the gospel of Christ teaches him; how great the consolation of a real interest in his redeeming grace; and how sure, how abundant and glorious the joys of
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the everlasting kingdom, to which the Redeemer has promised to conduct him! — In such a view of things, it is easy to see on which side our true interest lies, and that it is infinitely important. How amazingly infatuated then must the heart be, that can deliberately act in contradiction to such conviction!! — Great and merciful God, grant that while I read these reasonings in favour of my duty to thee, and my own eternal felicity, I may, indeed, feel the power of thy grace accompanying them, and practically conclude, that no *season can be so convenient as the present* to repent and return unto thee, and cast myself at the feet of thy mercy!

Where can the guilty wretch be found,

However great and high,

Who from his *conscience* and his God,

Can always hope to fly!

E'en *Felix*, when he feels within

The sin-avenging power,

Trembles, and owns repentance due,

Tho' still he shuns the hour.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXII.

*—Unless thy law had been my delight, I should
then have perished in my affliction.*

Pfal. cxix. 92.

IT is of very great importance to know how to conduct ourselves in a state of adversity; and to that end to have our minds furnished with proper principles of conduct, and proper sources of support and consolation. For want of these things we are often very unhappy in ourselves, very troublesome to those about us, and very affronting to our GOD.

The generality of wise and thinking men have been so sensible of this, that many of them have made it their particular study to discover such principles of conduct, and such sources of support and consolation, as the present afflicted state of human nature required. They have called in the aids of reason and philosophy, and have said a great many just and useful things upon the subject.

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But, where a divine revelation has been wanting ; or, if enjoyed in some lesser degree, has been obscured with the false reasonings and superstitious fancies of ignorant and foolish men, there has been always a very great defect in the result of their inquiries ; and they have not been able to discover the true road to happiness through the dark and dreary shades of adversity. If they have found any consolation at all, it has been that only, which is delusory and vain : the shadow instead of the substance ; which has always disappointed their hope in extremities. Philosophy, even though assisted by the traditionary remains of the ancient revelation, has never been able to furnish out any expedients in this case, but what have been crude and indigested, inconsistent and ineffectual. The *Epicureans* and *Stoics* went upon very different principles, and took very different methods, to bear up under the calamities of life ; and though supported and encouraged by all the pride of their respective sects, they both miserably failed, and often shamefully exposed the weakness and folly of their boasted wisdom.

To plunge into the deeps of sensual delight, and the gratification of the lower powers
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of nature, however it may stun the sensations of grief for the present; or, by amusing the imagination, give a temporary ease to the pains we feel under any calamity, can neither remove the cause of them, prevent their return, nor bear away the mind itself out of the reach of its own painful reflections upon them, and their consequences. Nor will the subtlest reasonings upon fate and destiny; the utmost endeavours to persuade myself that I have no feeling, and that pain is not pain, give me any *real* ease in a fit of the stone; or make me feel that I am not unhappy, when I have lost the dearest friend of my heart, whose wisdom was my guide, and whose sympathy used to soften all my woes. However any of these may serve a present occasion, or afford a short relief under the *lesser* evils of life, they will be found nothing, and worse than nothing in the *greater*; particularly in the article of death, and just apprehensions of what must follow.

The *Epicure*, by repeated indulgences in the pleasures of the animal, impairs the nobler powers of reason; robs himself of those more refined enjoyments they would afford him; sinks by degrees into a state of brut-

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lity; loads his body with disease, and his name with infamy; and at last meets the hour of his dissolution, either with irrational stupidity, or unmanly terror; while the affectedly unfeeling *Stoic*, borne down by the variety and greatness of his calamities, loseth himself in his false reasonings; sinks under his burden, and as the last desperate effort for consolation, plunges the fatal dagger into his heart! — Hence appears the propriety and justice of the Psalmist's remark — *Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.*

The book of *God*, amongst many other excellencies, is admirably calculated for the furnishing of our minds with the best principles of conduct; the most effectual sources of consolation under every affliction that can possibly befall us; yea, against the terrors of death, and the eternal world, beheld in their clearest and strongest light. And it is no inconsiderable part of the evidence that proves it of divine original, that its doctrines, precepts, promises, are adapted so perfectly to the real feelings of our nature, and the necessity of our condition; and so effectually teach us that wisdom,

wisdom, which the wisest of men, without it, have sought in vain. Particularly—

It teaches us to consider affliction and death as, indeed, the appointments of the great Sovereign of the world, whose will is not to be resisted; but as appointments under the conduct of his infinite wisdom and goodness, and designed for our real advantage;—that is, designed as effectual remedies against the moral weakness and depravity of our natures;—to lead us to apply our hearts to the study of true wisdom;—to raise our ideas of happiness infinitely above the enjoyments of this world, and check the too strong tendency of our affection to them;—to render moral evil, which is the spring from whence all natural evil flows, our greatest aversion;—to purify our hearts, and dispose them to relish the divine pleasures of religion and virtue, the favour of God, the love of *Christ*, and the blessings of his salvation.——This divine book assures us, that God himself takes particular notice of our afflictions; interesteth himself in them; will give us strength to bear them; and reward our patience and resignation with so much the more abundant felicity. It sets before us a cloud of witnesses, with his
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own blessed and glorious Son at their head, who *endured a great fight of affliction*; bore up under the most complicated and dreadful calamities, with a dignity of mind, that no other set of men in the world could ever equal: and this by depending upon the wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness of God, and the assurances of his word. That book also teaches the afflicted mind, the true nature and design of our present sufferings, and how they may not only be best and most easily borne, but how they may be *improved* to some of the most valuable purposes of life; and, at the same time, opens to its view the glorious recompence of reward in the future state; and gives it the strongest and most indubitable assurances, that ALL, who *through faith and patience*, submit to the hand of God, and wait his pleasure, shall find their afflictions, however long and heavy, *work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

Happy then the man, who firmly, and with all his heart, believes the contents of his Bible as the word of the LIVING GOD; who approves the way to happiness there pointed out; who trusts and depends upon the promises there made to him; and makes it his study

study and care to conform to the precepts and rules of conduct there appointed;—who draws his comforts from these sources, and makes them indeed his *delights*!—This man will not, cannot *perish in his affliction*, be it ever so great. Though *he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand*. He shall not sink into despair; shall not be left without, at least, the supporting presence of his God, while his trials last;—nor, ordinarily, without some real experience of those peculiarly delightful *consolations*, which are in *Christ Jesus*. Be then the law of God thy *delight*, O my soul: apply to these never-failing springs of consolation in all thy afflictions; humbly rest upon the divine faithfulness, and wait patiently for the promised salvation.

Teach me, O God, to judge aright,

Of all thy ways;—and see

Thro' life's dark scenes the heavenly light

That leads my soul to thee!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXIII.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Psal. xxiii. 1.

OF all the creatures upon earth, man is the most necessitous; and, left to himself, the most ignorant of the nature of his true happiness, and how to pursue it with success. It must therefore be a book of great excellency that can inform us, with certainty, where all our wants may be supplied; how we may be delivered from all the miseries we feel and fear, and our happiness be complete in its degree and duration. This book is the BIBLE. There the supreme good is proposed to us for this purpose. There the ETERNAL God declares himself willing to bestow the blessings of his paternal love upon us. And many, and most graciously condescending, are the ways his infinite wisdom has taken to represent this great and interesting truth. He not only tells us of his almighty power and mercy; expatiates on the perfections of his nature, as the Lord and possessor of earth and
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heaven, and assures us of a welcome, whenever we humbly apply to him, and seek his favour: but, to encourage our application to him, he sometimes condescends to represent himself in characters the most gracious and familiar to us; expressive of the greatest attention to our interest, and into which we enter with the greatest ease and sensibility.—Such is the *pastoral character* which the Psalmist applies to him in the text—*The LORD is my shepherd*.—What was intended by this familiar representation of the great JEHOVAH, this divine writer, who was once himself a *shepherd*, very well knew:—particularly, that it implied peculiar tenderness and concern for the health, prosperity, and safety of the flock, and a peculiar interest in it. Thus, while he *familiarized*, he *realized*, the idea of the divine wisdom and goodness, care and faithfulness, with respect to himself;—or, that the great JEHOVAH would guide him in all his right ways; would protect him from all his enemies; would heal all his spiritual diseases; support him in all his trials and fatigues; refresh, comfort, delight his soul, and at last fully and eternally satisfy it with the provision of his grace.

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This he was sure of, because he verily believed that the great God was perfectly acquainted with all his necessities, and knew how and in what manner to supply them the most effectually;—that the stores of the divine goodness were inexhaustible, and every way adapted to his case, and capable of answering to every circumstance of it;—and that God had actually and solemnly engaged to take care of his happiness;—had redeemed him, and set him apart for himself;—had many ways interested himself in his welfare; and had even pledged his truth and faithfulness, in many gracious declarations and promises, to make his felicity complete and eternal; so that he should, indeed, *not want* either *grace or glory, or any good thing*; but that even his afflictions should turn out some of his greatest mercies and enlarge his bliss.

And this, in substance, is the very assurance which the divine word gives to every true believer: — these pleasing representations of God, and his grace, are made to every one, who penitently *forsakes his sinful ways and thoughts, and turns to the Lord*, and cleaves to him with his whole heart, in divine faith, love, and obedience; they have all the same
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general grounds and reasons to assure themselves that they also shall not want, because God is also *their shepherd*, will care for them, never leave them nor forsake them, and bestow even himself upon them as their everlasting portion, their exceeding great reward. May this God be *my shepherd* too, and take me under his care as one of the *sheep of his pasture* ! Then how poor and mean soever I may be in this world, *I shall not want* any thing really necessary to my happiness here or hereafter, for I shall indeed *dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*.

The LORD *my shepherd* is,
My soul no want shall know ;
He leads me to the gentle streams,
Where living waters flow,

Amidst the rich repast
His goodness does prepare,
I feed, and take my constant rest
Beneath his watchful care.

Adored be the God,
That takes such tender names ;
My heart rejoices in his love,
My tongue his praise proclaims.

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MEDITATION XXIV.

—*Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.*— Heb. x. 22.

IT is the distinguishing and glorious excellency of the religion of Christ, that it is adapted to the condition of mankind, and extends its influence to the great and leading principles of human nature, and all the important concerns of its rational and immortal powers.

Conscience is that power in man, whereby he discerns the difference between moral good and evil, and finds a peculiar pleasure connected with the one, and a peculiar pain with the other. It is the seat of spiritual feeling, the throne of God within us, or rather his viceroy and judge acting by his commission.

This power was originally good, as all the works of God were; but is now vitiated and depraved by sin, and laden with the guilt of it. It is dark and blinded; and gives, very often, a wrong judgment in matters of the highest

highest moment; so that men call *good evil*, and *evil good*.—It flatters with false hopes, is stupidly insensible to real and the most awful dangers, and is often distressed with superstitious, and sometimes real, fears and tormenting forebodings of eternal perdition.

To cure these evils, Jesus Christ is revealed in the gospel.—He offers himself a sacrifice to God for the atonement of sin; by his holy spirit we are led to believe and trust in him for our pardon and acceptance with God.—Through his grace we find a divine light break in upon our consciences; we see, indeed, that we are sinners, but we also see God reconciling us to himself; and, as this grace lives indeed in our hearts, feel ourselves reconciled to him; that is—we esteem and honour the deliverer, and rejoice in his salvation, above all things;—we draw near to God, with pleasure and delight, in the duties of religion; our consciences become tender, and startle at the very appearances of sin, even while they enjoy the most comfortable assurances of pardon;—we watch against temptation, as well as pray not to be led into it;—we love the whole will of God, and sincerely endeavour to conform to it;

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and, in a word, feel in our hearts the peace of God, which the *world can neither give nor take away*. Thus the conscience becomes *good*, in opposition to every sense in which it was before *evil*: — it is enlightened, purified, easy, satisfied, faithful, and enjoys the taste of everlasting life. Happy change! glorious deliverance! But how great is the malignity of sin, to disorder so noble a power in man, to such a deplorable and dangerous degree as we find it does! and how efficacious the grace of the Redeemer, particularly the virtue of his sacrifice, that can thus purge even *the conscience*, and restore so depraved and wretched a creature as man to himself, and to his God! — Oh that I may feel more of this purifying, consolatory love of God in my heart! How delightful then would all his service be on earth! How pleasing and desirable the prospects of that more perfect experience of his saving grace in the future and eternal world! And how joyfully should I pass through the shadow of death to the possession of it!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXV.

—*And inquire in his temple.*— Psal. xxvii. 4.

AMIDST the deplorable darkness that sin has brought upon the human mind, it is an unspeakable mercy that we have an additional light to that of reason and nature, even that of a divine revelation, wherein every thing relative and necessary to our recovery from the ruins of the fall unto everlasting happiness is laid before us in the most clear, comprehensive, and gracious words even of God himself. It is reported of *Socrates*, that he should lament, “that after all his most sincere and earnest endeavours to please the DEITY, he could not tell whether he should be accepted or not.” And well he might, as in consequence of that uncertainty, he must be left to quit this life with the awful fears of the worst: for without some discovery, or assurance from God, some way or other given, it is impossible for any man in the mere state of nature, assisted in his inquiries by its dim and

clouded light only, to come at any solid and settled judgment about even the *reality* of a future state of existence, much less at an *assurance* of his being *happy* in it.

Convinced, as he might be, of the moral character of the DEITY, and consequently that he must delight in and reward virtue: yet how far, and under what circumstances he would reward it;—whether he *would*, or indeed, consistently with the dignity of his government, *could* reward any but perfect virtue;—or, if he could *forgive*, upon what terms, and how far he would carry that forgiveness?—All this, the most serious and philosophic mind could but guess at without a divine revelation. False assurance he might fall into, but a full and rational certainty must be out of the reach of all human power, in this case. And thus, in fact, we find it. The most moral, thinking, and inquisitive among the men of wisdom in the heathen world, are perplexed inextricably, and utterly lost in painful confusion in this momentous inquiry, even with all the advantages some of them have derived from revelation, though not acknowledged!

Happy

Happy Britons ! who have the book of God put into their hands, where *life and immortality are brought to light* ; where the nature and perfections of God are sufficiently explained ; —where we learn, not only our sin and misery, but the way and manner of our recovery from them, or how to answer the great interesting question, *What shall I do to be saved ?* and where the true penitent believer in Jesus is assured, *that he shall not perish but have everlasting life.* — Where we not only see, how God can forgive, even the greatest trespasses to the believing penitent, consistently with his holiness and justice ; but, are also shewn, which way we may obtain the grace necessary to enable us to repent and believe ; and have the most powerful motives to a serious attention to all these things laid before us in the views there given us of the love of God, and the nature of the future state.

How seriously concerned then should we be, to make a right use of this most necessary and important discovery of salvation ! How ready to fall in with the instructions here given us ! How desirous of feeling the living saving power of the doctrine of Christ, and of the mercy of God in him !

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXVI.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
 Matt. v. 4.

HOW surprisingly do numbers mistake the nature and means of happiness! They look upon the possessions of this world as the principal objects of delight.—The rich and the great, the young and the gay, are generally denominated and esteemed the blessed.—Hence such eager pantings after the dust of the earth; and hence such envyings and repinings at those who possess it! But, would they look into their Bibles, and sit down at the feet of Jesus, who must be allowed to be the best judge of the happiness of mankind, they would be led into other views of things;—they would see, that the first step to true felicity lies in being *poor in spirit*;—in *mourning* with a sincere contrition, and penitence of heart, for sin and its evil consequences; and as the next step to that felicity, to be daily and earnest suppli-
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cants at the throne of grace, for a part in the love of God through Christ. They would look upon the pardon of sin, and an interest in the blessings of the life to come;—the purity and holiness of their hearts;—the supports of the divine grace—communion with God in the institutions of his worship in this world; and the perfection of holiness, glory, and joy, which the gospel promises in the next; they would look upon these things as their highest, and indeed only *real* happiness!—For these they would give the whole world were it in their possession, with all its honours and pleasures;—for they are sure, that these instances of the loving-kindness of God are better than life.

This life's a dream—an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go
Has joys substantial and sincere;
When shall I 'wake, and find me there?

WATTS.

They are therefore already blessed—blessed in the *earnest*, though not in the *full* possession;—blessed in really knowing where true happiness lies—in the exercise of their desires
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after it — in proper qualifications for it; — and in having it made over to them by the everlasting covenant of mercy, through faith. — A covenant, sealed with the precious blood of Jesus; and applied by the Holy Spirit; that spirit who has led them to mourn for sin, and to choose these blessings for their portion. — Happier, therefore, with these gracious dispositions and assurances, though in the very depths of spiritual sorrow, than the wicked neglecters of Christ and his salvation can possibly be in the fulness of their joy. There is a regard indeed due to the business, and even the pleasures of this life; but a regard that should always be subordinate to our duty to God, and the interest of our immortal souls in the life to come. The most that we can enjoy in this life, if limited to its duration only, is very little. And we are told, that if we *seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness*, all other things shall be added.

Do thou, my soul, choose this better part. Be not afraid of those convictions that would lead thee to mourn for sin; *that* should be always thy affliction, and holiness thy delight. Thou art then indeed happy. The
 consolations

consolations of Christ, as thy righteousness, strength and salvation, are thine.—Thou shalt feel their reviving, rejoicing power, even in this world : and possess them in the fulness of joy in the next. He himself has said, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*; and what he says must be true.—Oh, that I could always keep this gracious promise in view ! particularly in the seasons of affliction, when I most need such consolations.

But while encouraging this truly spiritual grief and concern for my sins, I avoid all the wild and licentious festivity of those who are *lovers of pleasure more than God* ; let me be careful lest I fall into the other extreme of gloomy melancholy, unreasonable fears, and superstitious afflictions. The bright hopes the gospel of Christ gives me of present comforts and everlasting joy at last, should inspire me with cheerful gratitude to the divine goodness, and when I can rejoice in nothing else, let me rejoice in the assurance Christ has given me, that though a *mourner* now, I *shall be comforted* in his due time, to mourn no more.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXVII.

Fools make a mock at sin.— Prov. xiv. 9.

TO a mind retired from the world into itself, and seriously thoughtful about the moral government of mankind, and their everlasting existence, there is nothing more surprising than the very little account the generality make of SIN.—It is still more strange, that they should act in such evident contradiction to their rational and immortal natures, as even to seek their happiness in its mean and groveling pleasures; or look for real enjoyment in that which is the source of all the evils, both of body and mind, we ever do or can possibly feel.

And yet we have innumerable instances of this fact every where; and, more or less, even in ourselves. Such is the weakness and depravity of human nature!

But what is it to *make a mock at sin*? Or what does the expression imply?—Certainly to treat it as a matter of very little consequence?—This is the case of those who
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take any degree of pleasure in committing it; make it their diversion and amusement; fondly embrace temptations to it; and endeavour to stir up the corruptions of their hearts, and rouse their vicious appetites, by any incentives to it;—the case of those who boast of their wickedness, and speak of it not only with an air of satisfaction and delight, but of heroism and triumph; as if, because they dared to violate the laws of their nature and their God, they had indeed done gloriously, and deserved the greatest applause, Psal. x. 3. Phil. iii. 19.—This is the case also of such as make a jest of their sins; turn off the reprehensions of the wise and the good with a laugh; or banter themselves, and their companions, out of all scruples of conscience, and reluctance to run the lengths of wickedness, to which temptations and occasions may solicit them.—And even they make a mock of sin too, who wilfully shut their eyes against the light that would convince them of it; or endeavour to disguise their past, or their intended transgressions, under any specious pretences and false colourings; or, as the apostle expresses it, *harden themselves through the deceitfulness of sin.* Nor can they escape

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this guilt, who, though they dare not indulge themselves in the grosser and more common vices, make no scruple of what they think little matters, and such as may not expose their characters to public censure. In a word, they who think of making atonement for their guilt by superstitious rites and ceremonies; or a particular zeal and punctuality about the mere externals of religion; or any other medium not appointed in the word of God, or derogatory to the great sacrifice and propitiation, CHRIST JESUS, make a mock of sin. They treat it with levity extremely inconsistent with its odious and destructive nature, and the displeasure which the great God has shewn against it.

And can there be any greater FOLLY than this? Must not the wretch be totally lost to the least degree of true wisdom, and be possessed with most miserable infatuation, who can sport with the greatest of all evils, or treat even with indifference any thing so extremely offensive to the GREATEST AND BEST of beings as *sin* must be? — Against which he has set the face of his most holy and just laws, and the terrors of his tremendous justice; — and for the atonement of which
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he has appointed the precious blood of his dearly-beloved Son, shed amidst all the terrors of crucifixion, and the distressing darkness and sorrow peculiar to himself! To make a mock of sin, is to make a mock of the great and eternal God; his power and justice, his goodness and mercy. It is to make a mock of the Blessed Redeemer, and count the *blood of the covenant an unholy thing*. In a word, it is to make a mock of all the miseries of this life, and of the awful hand of death; of the bliss of heaven, the torments of hell; of our own souls, and all their high and important interests in the eternal world; and consequently of all the most serious and solemn things that can engage the attention of the human mind. Alarming thought!—May I feel the power of it upon my heart! May I lament, with unfeigned grief and concern, that I have so often trifled with sin, though but in the lesser instances of it; and resolve, through grace, henceforth to treat it with the utmost abhorrence and detestation.



MEDITATION XXVIII.

— *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

1 Cor. v. 7.

THE true Christian has many characteristic differences from the man of this world: and the principles and conduct hinted in this text constitute one of them, not the least considerable. — He *walks by faith*, the other *by sight*.

The apostle was contemplating the great and distinguishing privileges of Christianity, and particularly the glorious hope of an happy immortality, the confidence he had of that happiness, and the clear and realizing views he had of its greatness; and, as the reason, adds in a parenthesis, *for we walk by faith, not by sight*. Which is as much as if he had said, “the reason why we entertain such great and delightful hopes, with respect to our future felicity, and are so assured of their accomplishment, is, *we are* BELIEVERS in the divine word; that *gospel* which has brought *life and immortality to light*.” And if any of us live more righteously and godly, more usefully and happily, than the bulk of mankind

kind do, it must be because we pay a more serious regard to the word of God, and live more entirely under the influence of it; that is, *we walk by faith, and not by sight*. For by *faith*, in our text, we must not understand merely the doctrine of the gospel, but an internal principle, the effect of divine grace, opposed to that of sense or *sight*; that is, a persuasion in the heart, of the truth, excellency, and importance, of what is revealed to us in the Bible; with a firm trust in it, sincere obedience to it; or a *belief*, resting upon the testimony of God, applied by his spirit, and governing the heart and life.

By *sight* here, as it stands opposed to *faith*, we must understand the lower affections and appetites of our nature, as they are influenced by the *visible* things of this life and world; or, as the apostle expresses it, *the things that are seen, and are temporal*; as *faith* respects the *things that are not seen, and are eternal*. *Sight*, therefore, here includes *reason*, as well as *appetite*, so far as it is corrupted and depraved, and under the influence of temporal good, the riches, honours, pleasures of the world, to the prejudice of religion and virtue, and the happiness therewith connected.

To walk by faith, is to live and act under the influence of that divine persuasion concerning the great truths of religion and our eternal life, which is included in the nature of divine faith. It is to *feel* the great objects of our belief, particularly the love of God in Christ, the divine virtue of the Saviour's obedience, death, and intercession, the reality and excellency of that happiness, which consisteth in the forgiveness of our sins, our acceptance with God, and communion with him, and the possession of everlasting life and glory in the future world. In a word, it is to live by the rules given,—depend on the promises made,—cultivate a taste for, and long after the enjoyments proposed in the gospel.

On the contrary, *to walk by sight*, is to live habitually under the influence of the things of this world only. It is to make the maxims and ways of the *men of the world, who have their portion in this life*, the governing maxims of our lives; — to listen to the temptations and solicitations of the things of sense and time; — and look no higher for our happiness, than the enjoyment of them. In a word, to walk by sight is to live the life of a mere sensualist, or one whose reason carries him

him no further than the pleasures arising from the possessions and enjoyments of this world; the doubtful speculations of false philosophy; or, at most, the mere externals of religion, and the empty parade of superstition.

And as *faith* and *sight* in this view, are very different principles of conduct, so is the respective happiness arising from them. They who live habitually under the influence of the things that *are seen and are temporal*, however highly indulged in their wishes, will find very little solid satisfaction, or such as will bear the reflections of calm reason. They may walk in a great deal of the pomp and glitter of this world, and a shew of great dignity and importance; but, if they *understand not* the objects of faith, and have no capacity for the divine enjoyments thence arising, they walk, as the Psalmist expresses it, *in a vain shew*; and are *but as the beast that perishes*. But the humble and sincere Christian, who receives the divine contents of his Bible into his heart; and thinks, and reasons, and conducts himself by them, will feel an exalting influence from them; something that raises his soul above the common level, into a nearer resemblance to angelic spirits; yea, even to a likeness

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likeness to God himself. He can extend his knowledge, and his desires, beyond the limits of time; enter into the invisible and immortal world; contemplate the perfections of God, the love of Christ, the plan of providence and grace, as laid down in the Bible; and look forward to the business and pleasures of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, with most pleasing emotions of soul, and anticipate much of the divine enjoyment of those glorious realities.

How long shall sense enslave the mind,

And I with restless pain,

Expect on earth delight to find,

Yet still expect in vain?

Faith, rising upward, points her view,

To regions in the skies;

There livelier scenes than Eden knew,

In bright perspective rise.

Oh, that this heav'n-born grace were mine!

My spirit then should soar,

In transport gaze on joys divine,

And cleave to earth no more

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MEDITATION XXIX.

— *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psal. lxxiii. 26.

THE consideration of the almighty power of God, would be extremely terrible to guilty creatures, were it not for Jesus Christ, and the view the gospel gives us of that power through him; but there, though we see it *awful*, yet also *delightful*; adapted at once to inspire us with fear and with hope. In Christ all the perfections of DEITY appear in their milder glories, graciously inviting us to devout contemplation. And the contemplation of such perfections must be at all times pleasing and comfortable, but especially so, when *our hearts and flesh fail us*, and every other earthly comfort too, as they will most certainly do in the hour of DEATH; and when not only our merely natural consolations will *fail*, but our *guilty hearts* will have much to *fear*, from so powerful a BEING as God, offended as he is by our sins. It is, therefore,
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of the greatest importance to us, to have something to rest our souls upon, in that awful trial, more and better than what nature itself can suggest to us. Such is Christ Jesus, as he is set forth in the gospel, the great atonement for sin, the fountain of holiness and of life.

In order to avail ourselves of this, it is proper, and indeed necessary for us, to believe and embrace the promises of the gospel, which make over the privileges and benefits, arising from the obedience of Christ and his intercession, in favour of the penitent believer. And, likewise, to make it our concern that these promises, and the hope we have in them, have a proper, *i. e.* a purifying effect upon our hearts and lives, and lead us to the practice of true righteousness with respect to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to our God.

Thus instructed, thus influenced by the grace of God, which has appeared to us through Jesus Christ, we may say with the same confidence the Psalmist did—*the Lord is the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever*;—that he will preserve us in existence, notwithstanding all the threatening appearances of destruction;—maintain the life and vigour of our graces, and be our most delightful,

lightful, satisfying, and enduring portion in both worlds;—employ, not only his goodness and mercy, but his wisdom and power, truth and faithfulness, the merits of his Son, and the influences of his spirit, for our complete salvation! Blessed portion this! With this how contented may we live even in the midst of pinching want, and dependent on the cold charity that distinguishes the professors of the latter day! And with this how comfortably, and even joyfully, may we die.—Possessed of the all-sufficiency of God through his Son, how desirable the hour, when *flesh and heart shall fail*, and we find ourselves carried away from every other confidence and hope, to live upon the immeasurable fulness of the uncreated, the all-comprehending, and eternal good! But how miserable the wretch, who, when he comes to feel this awful deficiency, has no such refuge, no God to fly to for consolation! Who can see nothing but an infinite power, joining with infinite justice, to condemn and punish! Lord, grant me wisdom to choose **THYSELF** for my portion, and give this world to whom thou pleasest!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXX.

— *It is finished.* —

John xix. 30.

THE words of dying men, especially of good men, are generally regarded, as worthy of particular notice and remembrance. How much more the dying words of the ever blessed Jesus! These were his last, excepting what St. Luke adds, *Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit*; which we have reason, from a comparison of both these accounts, to believe were but the conclusion of the same sentence.

Christ never said one thing in all his life that was not pertinent and useful; but these are words full of peculiar and important meaning; they signify, — that then all the prophecies and promises relative to this great event, his dying for us, were fulfilled; — all the types and figures of the Mosaic dispensation were now answered, and the dispensation itself at an end; — that the work of his public ministry was done; — that the peculiar obedience, both in active and suffering duty,

duty, required of him by his heavenly Father, as our mediator on earth, was then completed;—that the true and proper atonement for sin was now made;—and the new and living way actually opened, in a more abundant fulness for the penitent sinner's hope, consistent with the honour of the divine holiness and justice.

Thus amidst the darkness that hung over the cross, which to the eye of sense, and depraved reason too, was utterly impenetrable, faith discerns one essential capital article of the plan of a gracious providence accomplished;—the GREAT ATONEMENT, the everlasting, and truly divine PROPITIATION FINISHED; and infinite wisdom, justice, power, and mercy, shining forth in their brightest glories.—Here the awakened sinner, who perceives he has offended the infinite purity and majesty of the DEITY, and provoked his justice to punish him *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*, and who can find no help, no succour against the reproaches of conscience, the threatenings of the divine law, the dread of death and its consequences, but feels himself every way undone and hope-

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less,—here may see an all-sufficient atonement; a righteousness so complete, that even infinite purity itself can find no blemish in it. —Here, therefore, he may look with solid, rational, and delightful hope. —Hence feel his conscience purged from dead works; see his pardon signed and sealed, and a new right and title to eternal life made out and finished. —To this then it is his first and immediate duty to look;—humbly to lay hold of this mercy, and bless God for it, as what alone could prevent him from sinking into despair, should be his first concern;—to this he is encouraged by the declarations and promises in the gospel.

Other sinners, who are not thoroughly sensible of their guilt and danger, may make a shift with different mediums of comfort; but this great propitiation, this finished righteousness is the consolation and refuge of the truly enlightened sinner. From hence he receives strength against his moral depravity, and all his spiritual adversaries. —From hence he learns to hate all sin, to love and practise holiness, to delight in God, to overcome the world, and to seek a better country. —Here his heart finds the *peace of God that passeth all*

all understanding, — here he begins the new and divine life, and *serves the living God*, *worships him in spirit and in truth*; obeys the law of moral righteousness, with a cheerful and enlarged heart; learns and practises patience and submission to the divine will, under trying providences, — and waits for the Saviour from heaven to finish the other part of his glorious plan of redemption, &c.

How great the guilt then of trifling with a Christ thus presented to our notice! A Saviour whose character and righteousness is so complete and acceptable to God! — And, than which there is no other that can procure forgiveness for even one sin! And yet, alas! how great the number of these transgressions! Lord, give me grace to see more and more of my unworthiness, that I may *glory in the cross of Christ*, and that finished righteousness thy Son offered with his precious blood! Let this be my refuge, hope, consolation! — Upon this enable me in humble and obedient faith daily to live; in the comfort of this let me die; and then I am sure it will be the matter of my everlasting admiration, joy, and praise! Amen.



MEDITATION XXXI.

—*In thy presence is fulness of joy.* Pf. xvi. 11.

JOY, is pleasure highly relished, or the effect of a mind greatly agitated with delight, and what we are all naturally very fond of, and eagerly pursue. But how deplorably ignorant are the generality of mankind of the very nature of true joy and of the way to obtain it! And in consequence of this, how various their opinions and pursuits of what they call by that name! Not only the stupid unthinking many, who have scarcely any thing more than the lower powers of nature to influence them; and who are governed by the mere appetites of the body, or a weak, though often heated imagination; not only they mistake the good which alone can give them solid pleasure, but even the men of reason and science, of higher taste, and what they call philosophy, have shewn themselves miserably defective here, and left behind them sad traces of their vanity and folly.

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It is our infinite mercy that we enjoy the means of better knowledge, have a book put into our hands by the peculiar providence of God, that points us to the fountain of life; sets before us the true and genuine felicity of our natures, and tells us what methods to take in order to obtain it. From that divine book we learn,—that, *in the presence of the eternal God there is fulness of joy*;—and, that the way to obtain a part in it is, *by repentance towards him, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*.

By this *presence* of God, we are doubtless to understand, that more special and gracious manifestation of his being and perfections which he grants to his obedient people.—The presence, that quickens and purifies the heart of man, attracts and unites it to himself as the supreme good; the presence of which Jesus Christ, in particular, is the grand medium; and which therefore is styled by the apostle *a shining into our hearts, and the giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6.—The presence, which gives a vital efficacy to the means of grace; and renders them really conducive to the support and improvement of the divine life in this world;—The presence,

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which diffuses light, and life, and bliss, to us inconceivable, through the boundless regions of the worlds of immortality, to which it will safely conduct every humble and obedient believer.

Now in this *presence*, there must be *fulness of joy*,—because the favour and love of God, must be the reason that there is any such thing as joy to us;—because the pleasures hence arising, are peculiarly adapted to our nature and condition as reasonable and immortal creatures;—because they are pure and unmixed without any alloy; vast and comprehensive including every thing necessary to our happiness;—and because they are constant, undeclining, and eternal.

Let not religion then, which leads to the possession of such solid and sublime delights, be called irrational, or these pleasures themselves enthusiasm and delusion.—Surely, if there be *reason* and *reality* in any thing, it must be here! —If the conversation, the friendship, and favour of men, who have the power and inclination to do us good, are capable of affording us any real satisfaction, how much more the favour and friendship of the greatest and best of beings? — And if he has made us capable
of

of the knowledge of his perfections, and of the nature and excellency of virtue, why not of feeling real delight in these things? Yea, where can we expect to find a rational delight but here! Let it, therefore, O my soul, be thy care to seek this solid felicity above all.—Leave this world to those who know no higher good, but set thou thy affections on the things that are above; let the pleasures resulting from the gracious presence of that BEING, who is the original inexhaustible source of all that is truly and eternally delightful, be thy chosen portion!

What empty things are all the joys,

That time and sense can give?

Possess'd; e'en that possession cloy,

And when they're lost we grieve.

But in thy gracious presence, Lord,

The streams of heav'nly bliss,

In all their richest fulness flow,

And never never cease.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXII.

*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord
of Hosts!* Psal. lxxxiv. 1.

THOUGH *the Lord be indeed high,*
he hath respect unto the lowly.—Though
he has a *court* in heaven, which he fills with
the unutterable splendour of his majesty, and
blesseth with his infinite goodness, and where
he is honoured and adored by the greatest
and best of his creatures; yet he disdains not
to have a *tent* of special residence, *a place* for
his *honour to dwell in*, where he displays his
milder beauties, and receives with infinite
condescension, the humbler and feebler wor-
ship of weak and even sinful men upon earth,
who penitently seek his mercy. And even
these *lower courts* of his are so amiable and
desirable, that the *truly pious* have always
held them in the highest veneration, and pre-
ferred a day in them above a thousand else-
where. I say the *truly pious*; for it is to such,
and such only, they can be agreeable and
lovely :

lovely : that is, to such as are capable of discerning a beauty and excellency in spiritual things, and of relishing with real delight the pleasures of converse with their Maker, or the business of religion ; such as have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, and are desirous of being further indulged in that divine pleasure. To others, the offices and institutions of devotion, and every the least approach towards the vital power of religion, and real communion with God, is so far from being a delight, that it is their utter aversion. They prefer infinitely the *tabernacles* of worldly business and pleasure, and even of wickedness, to those of *the Lord of Hosts*.

Is there nothing then in the tents of piety, the courts of our God ? Nothing in the duties of his public worship here on earth, worthy the attention and desire of mankind, that they so universally agree to slight them ? Is there nothing real, solid, becoming our reasonable natures, to be found in the public worship of God ? Yes, there is. For here God himself has declared that he is in a peculiar and delightful manner present, even *wherever two or three are gathered together in his name*. Here sinful creatures, if humble and penitent,

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penitent, and sincerely desirous of approaching their God, in the *new and living way* he has appointed, may *draw nigh* to him, and hold a divine correspondence with him—hear him speaking to them by his holy word, in the style of grace and mercy;—and here they may speak to him, in humble supplication and praise, with assurance of his acceptance through Christ.—Here they are taught the things that belong to their eternal peace, under the advantages peculiar to God's own sacred appointments. Here, therefore, they often commence a saving acquaintance with HIM and his Son JESUS; learn the evil of sin, and flee from it; the excellency of holiness, and seek warmly after it;—or, if acquainted with these things already, improve in that acquaintance, and all the graces and comforts of the divine life.—Here the afflicted Christian often comes, almost overwhelmed with the sorrows and distresses of this mortal state, and either meets deliverance from them, or divine support and encouragement under them.—Here he comes, doubting of an interest in the love of God, and finds his doubts removed, and his evidences of that interest cleared up to his unspeakable satisfaction.—

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In a word, here the great God confirms the *truth*, and applies the *good*, of his gracious promises ; strengthens our right principles and resolutions ; impresses his image in more lively characters upon our hearts ; and seals us for his own.—Not only gives us *grace*, but lets in the dawnings of eternal *glory* upon our minds, and prepares us for the full and final enjoyment of it in the world to come !

How strange and lamentable is it then, that we have no more veneration for the courts of God, no more delight in the great and important blessings there to be enjoyed ! My soul, cultivate a taste for these spiritual pleasures, that it may be thy hope and desire indeed to *dwell in the house of the Lord for ever !*

Might I but fill the meanest place,
Within thy house, O God of grace ;
Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,
Should tempt my feet to leave thy door.

All needful grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory too :
He gives us all things, and withholds
No real good from upright souls.

WATTS.
MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXIII.

—Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!

John i. 47.

THOUGH sinless perfection is not to be expected of any mere man in the present life; yet a godly sincerity, and a conscience void of wilful offence, which is the evangelical perfection, is most certainly attainable through the grace of God. Hence we read of Job, that he was *perfect and upright*; of Zacharias and his wife, that they *walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless*; and of this good man Nathaniel, that he was an *Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile*.

To this kind of perfection, indeed, we are no more able to attain of ourselves, without special assistance, and a divine seed implanted in our hearts from above, than we are to attain to the legal perfection of sinless obedience. *Sincerity*, in the extent required in the gospel, being as abhorrent to the corruption of our natures, and the deceitfulness that sin has brought into our hearts, as an entire subjection to the law of God.

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To the forming, therefore, of this excellent character, which our Lord speaks of in the text, we are undoubtedly beholden to his holy and blessed spirit, the great agent in his kingdom of grace. Nor can any man be said to be an *Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*, until he comes under the governing influence of the Redeemer's power; or until he is heartily willing to know and do the whole will of God, so far as revealed to him, and is really concerned to appear in the world in his true character, and as he wishes to appear before the all-seeing Majesty of Heaven.

No man, therefore, that refuses the divine instruction, and will not know, what God has given him the means of knowing; or, that is not heartily disposed to act up to the convictions of his mind, or follow the prescriptions, as well as evidences of truth, can be said to be *sincere*, and *without guile*.

The *Israelite indeed* cannot bear the thought of disguise, or being one thing without, and another within. He will not, indeed, be ashamed of appearing with the marks of the genuine fear of God upon him, or to let the world see, that he is a follower of Christ, and lives for an eternal futurity: but he will not

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affect an unnecessary shew and parade of piety;—he will be every where *religious*, but no where *ostentatious*; will not be ashamed to be known to be devout, but would rather, that that opinion should be formed of him from the *effect* of his devout exercises, than from any extraordinary *appearances* in them; and therefore, though grave and serious in the worship of God, he will indulge a cheerful and innocent freedom in his social converse; well knowing, that to put on the same solemnity of behaviour in his *diversions*, as in his *devotions*, would be truly ridiculous; and to take the same liberties in the latter as in the former would be impious.

What I to the world am seen,
Make me, gracious God, within;
Just and upright would I be,
Pure from all hypocrisy.
Whilst thy holy name I bear,
Be thy glory all my care.

MEDITA-



MEDITATION XXXIV.

The same continued.

—BUT this real Christianity, and *guileless sincerity*, is best known by certain characteristic evidences of its prevalence, which more or less will always attend it; such as, making conscience of performing secret duties, and avoiding secret sins, as well as public. A hypocrite may be a zealous attendant on divine institutions in public, from various motives; and may be concerned to avoid the more open and notorious sins, and maintain a fair semblance of virtue and piety in the world; he may be *publicly* devout, and honest, and chaste, and temperate, &c. but he will not much concern himself about these things in *private*; at most, but with a superficial, cold indifference, just to keep his conscience quiet, and satisfy his vain hope; and therefore will readily indulge to any secret sin, that suits his taste, or falls in with his ruling passion. But an *Israelite indeed*, will pay

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a serious and conscientious regard to secret devotion, and the right and edifying manner of performing it. He will be temperate, chaste, just, good, in secret, and where no eye sees but that of God, and his own conscience; will be concerned to avoid all secret sins, and such as can be known to none besides himself, and him that knows all things; even *vain thoughts will he hate*,—the most secret deviations from God and goodness, and the most secret inclinations towards any one sin will afflict him.—His conscience has a peculiar and lively sensibility, and feels even the *appearances* of moral evil.—The guileless Christian, also, is willing to bear affliction for the sake, and with the hope, of getting rid of sin, and improving in grace and holiness. Not so the hypocrite and self-deceiver; he has no real concern upon his mind of that nature; no such principle to inspire and strengthen his patience.—The sincere Christian takes as much delight in the *precepts* as the *promises*, the *practical* as the *doctrinal* part of religion. And, indeed, his esteem for the *latter* arises from its influence upon his mind in favour of the *former*. He considers the glad-tidings of pardon, and the hope of eternal

nal life, as laying him under the most powerful, and at the same time pleasing obligations to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, and rejoices in the experience of their due effect.

And who that seriously considers these things, considers how amiable this guileless temper and conduct is, both in the sight of God and man; how necessary to our acceptance with God, though not as the meritorious *ground* or reason, yet as a qualification for the *enjoyment* of that blessing, without which the righteousness of Christ itself cannot avail us, as to our final happiness; and how necessary to render the means of grace successful, as the apostle witnesses, 1 Pet. ii. 1, &c. and considers also, that however long we may continue our self-delusion and hypocrisy, we shall be detected and convinced at last; that God, even now, sees it, and will soon bring it into judgment, to our everlasting confusion and ruin;—I say, who that considers these things, would not even earnestly wish to be an *Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*?

Let us then lay these particulars to heart. Let us judge ourselves, as we know God will judge us at last; and, if possible, deal as closely and fairly by ourselves now, as he will

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do at his tribunal;—let us remember we are hastening to a world, where there are no disguises, but every one appears as he is; and that it cannot be long ere we are there. Let us pray to the great God to search and try us now, and lay open our whole heart to our view; and if there be any iniquity in us, to deliver us from it. Let us *set him always before us*, consider his eye as every where, and every moment upon us. This is the way to obtain that grace that is necessary to form our hearts to that guileless temper, the blessed God himself honours with his approbation.

Lord, search my soul, try ev'ry thought,
Tho' my own heart condemn me not,
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of thine eyes.

Doth secret mischief lurk within!
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
Oh, turn my feet whene'er I stray,
And lead me in thy perfect way.

WATTS.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXV.

My meditation of him shall be sweet.

Psal. civ. 34.

SERIOUS and devout thoughts of God, and the perfections of his nature, his works of providence and grace, were the frequent and delightful employment of the divine Psalmist. In this infinite inexhaustible fund of excellence, he found rich supplies for his meditations, and noble satisfaction in the duty. But does not this denote a temper of mind very different from that of the bulk of mankind? Is God, or any thing belonging to him, in a spiritual and just sense, the subject of meditation with the generality of the sons and daughters of Adam? Are not most of them constantly employed in the business, cares, or pleasures of this life; and their *thoughts* swallowed up in them so entirely, as that God *is not* as he ought to be *in any of them*? Yes; even the best do not think so much, so frequently, so warmly upon him, as they should do! The Psalmist, therefore, in this case must be under a *divine influence*;—his heart,

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heart, in some good degree, must be delivered from the evil bias brought upon it by sin. He must have some clear and affecting knowledge of God ; who, and what he was ; particularly as the maker and lord of the world ; and the peculiar father and portion of his obedient people.—He must be a believer of divine revelation, and sincerely choose and trust in God, as *his* God.—He must love him, and delight in the views given of his perfections in his works and word.—He must also frequently and piously separate himself and his heart from the world ; retire into himself, and turn his soul to the light of the divine countenance and favour, as his supreme delight. With such a disposition, it is no wonder that his meditations upon God should be sweet. What can be more delightful to a well-ordered mind, than fixed and enlarged thoughts on *such a* BEING as the eternal God ; what he is in himself, and what he is to us, and what he has done for us in Christ ?

To this holy and happy temper, the revelation the Psalmist enjoyed, though comparatively obscure, had not only a tendency to lead him, but actually did lead him. How much more reason have we to expect such effects

fects from the more glorious revelation we enjoy since the coming of Christ? — How much more clearly do the perfections and grace of God shine forth in *our* gospel? — What noble and sublime particulars concerning the Deity, and his dispensations of mercy towards man, are *there* suggested, as matter for our devout meditation! How strange then, that with all these superior advantages, we should come so infinitely behind the Psalmist? How low are our most elevated thoughts of the DEITY! How feebly do his perfections, and even grace in Christ strike our minds! *Life and immortality are brought to light*, but how little hold does this discovery get on our hearts! How slight the impressions it makes there! — How seldom do we think of those things, and how little to the purpose when we do! — What reason for humiliation and shame here! the lowest self-abasement cannot sufficiently express our unworthiness and degeneracy in this matter alone, even our unfrequent, slight, and unaffecting thoughts of the most high God, the GREATEST and THE BEST OF BEINGS: where there is enough to swallow up all our mental powers, and fix them for ever in the most earnest and delightful meditation!

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Let us be humble, however, and adore the divine goodness, that, by the example in our text, now calls us to better, more constant, and devout thoughts of God.—Let us attentively consider how the heart-affecting glories of the divine perfections open upon us in the gospel revelation! What wisdom, power, goodness, shine there! Consider, how God expresseth his love to a sinful world, by giving his dearly-beloved Son as a sacrifice to take away its sin!—How the blessed REDEEMER humbled himself, and became obedient even to the death of the cross, for that glorious purpose!—Into these things the *angels desire to look*; here they fix in delightful contemplation, and learn to love and adore with warmer and more lively affection. From henceforth let the great God and his love dwell upon our thoughts day and night.—And let some time every day be particularly devoted to a more serious and attentive meditation on them.—This is the way to find that sacred and divine sweetness the Psalmist enjoyed. Thus we shall be able, from our own experience, as well as our belief of the experience of others, to pronounce the ways of true religion to be *pleasantness, and all her paths peace.*

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXVI.

—*One thing is needful.*— Luke x. 42.

IT is our unspeakable felicity, that, being so ignorant of the *things that belong to our eternal peace*, as, through the corruption of nature, we all are, we have so divine and able an instructor as JESUS CHRIST.

We are apt to imagine a great many things necessary to our happiness; and amongst them, many that not only cannot in the least contribute to it, but even greatly hinder it.—There are indeed some so *really* necessary, that we cannot be happy without them; but they are all comprehended in this short sentence of our blessed Lord's—*One thing is needful*;—and that is, as the context leads us to observe, the *security of our eternal interest*;—which includes in it our pardon, sanctification, and possession of eternal life, through the power and grace of Christ—or, true religion in principle and practice; the love and fear of God, and the keeping of his commandments,

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commandments, through faith in his Son.—
This is needful.

It is so to *every one*; young and old, rich and poor, bond and free.—It is so at all times, and above all things else.—For the truth of this I may appeal to the testimony of God himself; the united voice of all good men, in all ages of the world;—the confessions of dying sinners, who have lived all their days in contradiction to it;—and the fears and hopes of our own consciences. These all assure us, that an interest in the favour of God through Christ, true religion in heart and life, is *necessary, absolutely, indispensably necessary* to our complete and final happiness!

What a surprising thing then is it, that a truth so clear should be so generally overlooked; and that where it is known and acknowledged, it should be so notoriously neglected!

One would think it was utterly impossible for a reasonable creature, to see and own itself polluted, guilty, and in danger of eternal ruin, and not be alarmed at that danger, and fly from it;—or, to hear of pardon, and eternal life freely offered to all penitent believers

lievers in Christ, and not feel the most ardent longings after a part in it, and rejoice at every word that invites him to embrace so important a blessing.—Yet we *see*, we *feel*, by woful experience, this is possible! Oh, the deplorable degeneracy of human nature! And oh, thrice welcome the grace that tends to deliver us from it! Happy, my soul, if that grace has opened thine eyes, and enabled thee to escape from a stupidity so dreadfully dangerous, and to choose the *better part*, the *one thing needful*! Adore that goodness and love of God, that has made thee to differ from thy former self. Make it thy serious care to bring forth the fruits of this grace, in a growing conformity to Christ, and to press forward to the fulness of righteousness and bliss, which is promised thee in a better world. To this pious care, the excellency of this grace, and its infinite importance to thy happiness, loudly call thee; and to trifle with such a call, and treat with inattention the adorable condescensions of the eternal God, must be such a sin, that I trust thou canst never be wilfully and allowedly guilty of.

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MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXVII.

— *To you is the word of this salvation sent.*

Acts xiii. 26.

THE salvation which Jesus Christ came into our world to accomplish, is the grand subject of the gospel revelation; the mighty work about which the eternal counsels, and the operations of providence and grace are particularly concerned. It is of a spiritual nature, and relates to our deliverance from the power and guilt of our sins, and the sad consequences of them as threatened by the divine justice. It implies our conviction of sin, and instruction in righteousness; the renewing of our minds, and the forming them to repentance and holiness; our interest in the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, for pardon and justification; our reconciliation with God, and the hope and enjoyment of his favour, both in this world, and in that which is to come; or, in other words, the enjoyment of ETERNAL LIFE. —

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— This salvation, therefore, is evidently of a spiritual nature ;——which is one reason why it is so little regarded, by numbers of those to whom the *words* of it are sent. I say little regarded, for this is the case, even though a matter of the utmost consequence to mankind, accomplished in a method, that amazingly displays the glories of the wisdom, justice, and above all, the LOVE OF GOD ;——though it cost the *Son of God* the deepest humiliation, and even the most shameful and bitter death of the cross ;——though it be a subject which, above all others, the angels *desire* to look into :——And lastly, though the very contemplation of it (much more the actual enjoyment) gives a truly divine and unutterable pleasure to the mind ;——notwithstanding all this, and ten thousand times more to the same purpose, there are multitudes every where, who *do*, or *may*, read and hear of it daily, that have no more esteem for it than for the most trifling thing in the world. No representations of its excellency and importance, make any impression upon their hearts ; they *live*, and *even die*, shocking as it is to say, they EVEN DIE without any serious regard to it ! And too many, amongst
O 2 those

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those who do pay some regard to it, content themselves with the least degree possible ;— feel no true and lasting desires after its blessings ;—no sense of any peculiar need they have of its grace ;—no relish for that peculiar satisfaction there is to be found in the hope of it!

How then, my soul, stand thy affections to this *gracious word, so worthy of all acceptance?* What a sense hast thou of the necessity and importance of an interest in it? How far has it appeared desirable? And, what is still more, how far has it been felt and experienced?—To *hear* of salvation, and not *know* it by a real interest in it, will but aggravate the misery consequent upon the neglect of it; for it is impossible to hear of it, and consider it, and not confess it the *one thing needful*; and with such a conviction in thy conscience, thus practically to trifle with, and treat it with inattention, must be a fearful aggravation of guilt.—From this guilt, therefore, let it be thy daily and fervent prayer, that the divine grace may always preserve thee!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

When confined from public worship.

—For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Mat. xviii. 20.

WELL may the truly pious prefer a day in the courts of God, and his public service, beyond a thousand elsewhere, for GOD IS THERE:—God their father, friend, redeemer,—the God they love with all their heart.

It is an unspeakable privilege to be in a capacity to approach this gracious presence in private worship, and to commune with him in secret; and rich and many are the blessings the children of God this way enjoy. But, as he has appointed public worship for the honour of his name, and the answering many great and important ends, such as the preservation and propagation of true religion, and the happiness of mankind; and as he has made our attendance upon it our indispensable

duty, we may be sure he has still other and further blessings to impart there; other tokens of his favour for us to enjoy; for he cannot bid us *seek his face in vain*; the contrary is fully implied, in Christ's saying, where *two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*. He is indeed every where in some respect or other; but in the places of *social worship*, where his faithful followers meet, to pay their homage to their God, he is present in a more particular and most gracious manner. — He is there—to take special notice of their wants and sorrows, to supply them; and of their faith, and hope, and love; and every grace, to strengthen and enliven, own and reward them as the case requires.—Here he most usually meets them in the power of converting grace;—and here he renews their spiritual strength and consolation.—Here he displays the peculiar character and work of a Saviour;—here they see his beauty, taste his love, and have the pre-enjoyment of the eternal Sabbath, the everlasting rest that remains for them!

O my soul! let these, and such like considerations, keep alive thy desires after the public worship of God. Number it amongst thy

thy afflictions, that ever thou art kept at home, while others have the liberty of going to meet their beloved Redeemer, and see him in the glories of his holy temple.—Bless him for private opportunities and seasons of communion, but still let thy desire also be to *appear before God* more publicly.

Miserably deceived must they be, who fancy that reading and praying at home will answer the same ends, as waiting upon God in his public institutions; it is an impeachment of the divine *wisdom*, in giving us such institutions; and of the truth, worth, and efficacy of the divine *promises* made to them.

But, if it be our real affliction now to be confined from appearing before our God in public worship, we have no reason to imagine that the infinitely greater misery of being for ever excluded from the more public worship of the heavenly world will be our portion.—And if the pleasures of communion with God now in his earthly courts, where so many sins and weaknesses attend us, be so great, and so delightful, what must the joy be, when we come to meet the *general assembly, the church of the first born*, in the temple of everlasting light and glory! where God in Christ will indeed,

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in the most exalted and happy sense, be in the midst of us and bless us; where the light of his countenance, in its fullest lustre, will always shine upon us, and our worship know no weariness, our pleasures no end!

LORD, 'tis with painful pleasure now,
I think on happier days,
When to thy temple I could go,
And see thy smiling face!

There oft with sweet delight I've sat,
And heard the *joyful sound*;
And there amidst my heaviest woes,
Thy gracious comforts found.

There did my heart in humble prayer,
With holy ardour glow;
There, whilst I join'd the rapturous song,
I felt an heav'n below.

But now, these blissful scenes deny'd,
I here in secret mourn;
Come, LORD, and set thy prisoner free,
And bid my joys return!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XXXIX.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 1 Cor. x. 16.

IF there is a BEING of infinite wisdom, the maker and lord of all things, as there most certainly is, we may be sure he has neither *made nor instituted anything in vain*, however unable we may be to account for its use and importance.

The whole Mosaic economy in general, and the exactness, so minutely observed in the structure of the tabernacle, and its utensils in particular, though little and insignificant, in the eye of a partial, weak, and prejudiced mind, most certainly had a meaning and importance in them, worthy of the wisdom of the God of Israel; becoming the dignity of true religion, and greatly conducive to its interest. We cannot, at this distance of time, point out *all* the purposes, which

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which the Hebrew ritual was intended to answer; but it is very evident, that, in general, it was admirably adapted to the genius of a people so ignorant, stupid, and lost to all due sense of religion, as that people most certainly were. And, among other things, it was particularly adapted to engage their attention to the worship of the *one living and true God*, and to preserve them from the shameful and horrid sin of idolatry, to which they were so greatly prone.

But much more clear is it, that the *positive* duties, or *institutions* of the *gospel* have their useful meaning. Particularly the LORD'S SUPPER. For in our text we are told it is the *communion of Christians in the body and blood of Christ*; or the benefits of his sufferings and death, as a sacrifice offered to God, *by way of atonement for our guilt.*

This institution has a respect to what is *past*, *present*, and *to come*.—To what is *past*; as being a solemn memorial of that great and amazing event, *THE DEATH OF THE SON OF GOD*, as *a propitiation for sin*.—It has a respect to the *present*;—as a visible sign of the real existence of such blessings, as the forgiveness of sin, holy likeness to God, and the enjoyment

enjoyment of his paternal love; — as leading us to Christ, in the lively exercise of true faith, for the enjoyment of these blessings; — and as reminding us of our professed separation from the pollutions of the world, our devotion to God as his peculiar people, and of that peculiar love and affection, union and fellowship we have with each other in the grace and hope of the gospel. — It has a respect to the *future*; — as it leads us to consider the *Lord Jesus* as opening for us a *new and living way* into the *holiest of all*, the more immediate presence of God, and the enjoyment of his redeeming love in the eternal world.

Thus it appears that this institution, though so plain and simple in its form, is designed to answer very valuable purposes in religion.

— Not only to perpetuate the memory of the most painful and amazing sufferings of the blessed *Jesus*, and his unexampled, and most glorious love to the children of men; but to improve the Christian's mind in all the graces and virtues of the spiritual life; strengthen his obligations to holiness, and his resolutions of living in the practice of it; to cheer his heart with divine consolation,

and

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and prepare him for the fulness of joy reserved for him in heaven.

How surprising is it then, that so many, even sincere lovers of Christ, should live in the habitual neglect of this significant, animating, and every way important institution! And this notwithstanding the Saviour himself *commands* them with the authority of a *sovereign*, and *entreats* them with the endearments of a *friend* to remember him in it! And, on the other hand, how surprising that so many, who call themselves Christians, should so frequently attend this gracious and improving ordinance, without being in the least either the better or the happier for it?—An ordinance so particularly calculated to lead us into the most affecting views of the love of God; the character and benevolence of Christ; the pardon of our sins, and the odiousness of their nature; the redemption of our persons from the dreadful miseries of eternal perdition, to the enjoyment of eternal life and glory; and this under all the affecting advantages of the most solemn devotion!—In a word, calculated to suggest to us every thing adapted to alarm, awe, melt, comfort, elevate the heart; every thing great, wonderful,

wonderful, delightful! — How surprising, I say, that an institution of this nature, constantly attended, should produce no better effects in the temper and behaviour of the professors of Christianity! But why is it so? — Not from any defect in the divine appointment, or the weakness of the institution, but from *their* coldness and formality, *their* want of attention to the design of it, and relish for the blessings annexed to it. Awful consideration! For surely an institution so sacred, so interesting, so expressive of the astonishing love of the great Redeemer, cannot be trifled with, in such a manner, with impunity.

Be thou, therefore, O my soul, exceedingly watchful here. *Keep thy heart with all diligence*; wait upon God in this ordinance, with earnest desires to find him graciously present there; approach the sacred table with penitential concern for thy sins, with earnest desires after thy improvement in the knowledge of Christ, and his redeeming love; in thy faith and hope in him, thy love to him; thy more perfect obedience to his will; and meetness for communion with him in glory!

MEDITATION XL.

— *A peculiar people.* —

1 Pet. ii. 9.

IN all ages of the world there has been, and will be, a *generation to serve the Lord*, a people to bear his name, hold forth his grace, and maintain his worship,—a people considered and treated by him as a body distinguished from the world.

In the household of our first parents, to say nothing of themselves, there was an *Abel*, who discovered a peculiar regard to the divine institutions and promises; and, *by faith* in them, offered a more excellent sacrifice than *Cain*.

In succeeding ages, when mankind were so universally corrupted, that God was provoked to destroy them by a flood, there was a *Noah* and his family, who signalized themselves by a love to true religion, and were (one of them excepted, who appeared to be actuated by the spirit of the world, though a professor of religion) a *peculiar people*.

In the days of *Moses* this peculiarity became very remarkable and national, in the posterity of

of *Abraham*, the friend of God ; who was himself an illustrious example of faith in God, and obedience to his will ; and was distinguished by him with peculiar favours. Though all were not the true Israel, that bore the name of Israel, yet to them were committed the divine oracles and a covenant of peculiarity ; a remarkable œconomy, or body of sacred laws, of distinguishing excellency and tendency, and the whole supported by singular providences ; so that they were marked out to the world, and separated from them as a *peculiar people, an holy nation*, devoted to God, and eminently favoured by him.

In allusion to this, though in a sense much ~~superior, and that speaks their far greater~~ felicity, ALL true believers in Christ, to whom ~~he~~ is peculiarly *precious*, are now a *royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a PECULIAR PEOPLE, AN HOLY NATION*, distinguished from the rest of the world, not barely by their general professions of Christianity ; not by peculiarities of their own invention, the badges of a bigotted party, assuming the name of *the CHURCH*, to the exclusion of all others, who sincerely profess the same faith, and live in holy obedience to it :—No ; but by the *pecu-*

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liar grace of God bestowed upon them;—their *peculiarly* lively faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice and mediation, and divine union with him through his spirit; by their *peculiarly* affectionate attachment to him, and delight in him as their only Saviour; their trust and hope in his promises, and obedience to his will:—by their *peculiar* seriousness and constancy in the worship of God, love to one another, and good-will to all men.—In a word, by their *peculiar* likeness to God, re-lish for the pleasures of religion, and regard to their duty in this world, and their infinitely superior interest in another.

Lord, grant me thy grace, that I may be indeed one of these *peculiar people*. Deliver me from all affectation of singularity, and zeal for the peculiarities that ignorant and partial men mistake for true religion!—Give me more and more of that wisdom which is from above, pure and peaceable;—of that true and vital faith, by which I may cleave to thee and thy word; be led to abhor all sin, and practise all righteousness and goodness. *In this kind of singularity*, however neglected or derided by the world about me, I most *earnestly wish to shine?*

MEDITA.

MEDITATION XLI.

— *Into thy hand I commit my spirit.*

Psal. xxxi. 5.

WHAT the *Psalmist* seems to speak only upon occasion of some imminent danger, the Blessed Redeemer adopts on the most solemn one of dying upon a cross for our sins.

And no words can be more proper for a dying Christian—Happy, to have a God so gracious to whom he might commit his spirit; and happy to have his faith and hope in such lively exercise as to be able to do it with solid comfort. For these words are expressive of a very high degree of holy resignation, and of divine pleasure in it.

It is the righteous appointment of the great God, that *we should all die*, and this because *we have all sinned*. But, considering our natural fondness for life — our attachments to this world — our consciousness of guilt—our apprehensions of the purity and justice of God—and the little we know of the *other world*—it is no wonder we fear to die,

and start back at the approach of the eternal unchanging state. Nothing, but some discovery made to us of the divine mercy; some knowledge of Christ, and of God reconciled by him, and a consciousness of such a faith in him as is productive of real holiness, can possibly take off the dread of this amazing change from our hearts, and bring us, with our eyes open, and a due sense of our guilt as sinners, to resign our spirits into the hands of God *the Judge of all*, with a voluntary cheerfulness!

But, instructed by the divine word and spirit where to look for pardon and acceptance with God, even to *Christ* the great sacrifice of atonement, and enabled to lay hold on this sacrifice with a penitential, believing, and obedient heart, the Christian arrives at this grand, this high and glorious act of faith; — can, with the most rational and comfortable hope, *commit his spirit into the hands of God*, make the solemn exchange of worlds, and launch into the invisible regions, not only without fear, but with a sacred composure and serenity of mind; yea, with even longing expectation, and ardent breathings after the blessedness promised there. — After freedom

freedom from all sin, and guilt, and misery;—after perfection of holiness, and the delightful visions of God in Christ;—after the union of the soul with the resurrection body;—and, in a word, after the fulness of joy, and of glory, which the Blessed Redeemer has insured for him.

Happy the Christian who dies with such prospects and hopes as these! He may well rejoice to meet his last hour, and be ready and willing to obey the summons of death. *He knows in whom he believes; he feels the power of the promises of the everlasting God; he has made the Most High his refuge; the blood of Jesus Christ has purged his conscience from dead works; and he finds his heart thoroughly changed by his grace; changed into the likeness of his Redeemer, and a taste for the delights of the heavenly world. Though he sees himself going from all mortal joys, yet he sees himself going to take possession of the inheritance with the saints in light; going to be for ever with him that loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood; going to share with him the joy unspeakable and full of glory!*

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLII.

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

THE great apostle St. Paul appears to be a man of strong sense and lively genius, capable of entering into all the subjects of human knowledge with peculiar taste and pleasure; and yet, *here* we see him setting a mark of neglect upon the whole *Circle of the Sciences*, and the learning of those times, while he has that most grand, astonishing, and delightful theme before him—**JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.**—

Not that he thought the study of *true* philosophy, or the other branches of human literature, of no account, or unworthy of cultivation in their place; but he would not suffer the most useful wisdom of that kind, (much less the vain philosophy then too generally admired) to stand in the room of the *knowledge of Christ*, or be put in competition with

with it; nor would he consider mere philosophy as having any *necessary* connexion with this *divine science*, or as giving its possessors any better pretence, or clearer title to the benefits of salvation, than those who were destitute of it.

By the *knowledge of Christ crucified*, this great man undoubtedly means — a just acquaintance with the doctrines and facts recorded in the gospel, concerning Jesus Christ; and particularly the leading occasions and design of his death upon the cross. Such a knowledge, as is accompanied with a knowledge of ourselves, as sinners against God; and of the suitability and excellency of Christ as a Saviour; and such a knowledge of these things, as penetrates the heart; brings the peace of God into the conscience; subdues the enmity of the will against the will of God; and inspires the soul with divine faith, hope, and love; persuades it to commit itself, and all its dearest immortal interest into his hands; leads it to hate and forsake all known sin, and sincerely study and practise universal holiness.

This was the knowledge the apostle himself had—and this the knowledge he laboured to promote.—Upon this he was determined to lay

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lay out all the strength of his genius; and to this make all his other accomplishments subservient.

But why all this distinguishing regard to *Christ crucified*?—Was there any thing so extraordinary and excellent in *this* person, in *these* circumstances of public infamy and reproach, to engage so sensible, so lively, so learned and polite a man, as the apostle appears to be, to pay him so high and signal a respect?—Doubtless he thought so, or he had not done it.—And so it will appear if we consider—

—That in this view the moral character of Christ appears in the fullest and most striking lustre; every thing that can adorn human nature, and render it truly worthy of admiration and esteem, is to be seen in the highest perfection here. Humility, patience, fortitude, contempt of the vain glory of this world; entire devotion to God, unshaken confidence in him; and the greatest goodness and love to man.—The doctrines and truths connected with this circumstance, and of which it was the life and soul, were of the highest consequence to the honour of God, and the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind;

mankind;—and were, by this means, rendered peculiarly clear and intelligible, and confirmed with the most ample and indubitable evidence.—Hereby a way was opened for the knowledge and contemplation of the divine perfections and government; and such discoveries made of the eternal world, and its felicities and glories, as afford the highest entertainment to the human mind; and are, at the same time, naturally productive of the most important and beneficial effects;—purging the conscience from guilty fears, and the heart from its vile affections; quickening all the powers of nature with divine life; and, in a word, bringing us near to God, transforming us into his likeness, uniting us to him, and satisfying us with his fulness!

—Well, therefore, might the apostle determine to *know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. And, surely, it is rather surprising that this determination should not be more universal, amongst such as are capable of any just reflection, and have the least taste for moral beauty.—But, alas! such is the depravity of the human heart; so foolish, rash, unthinking, stupid, are thousands amongst those
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who pretend to believe their Bibles, that they had rather pursue, even with great pains, the knowledge of the most trifling and unimportant subjects in the world, than the *knowledge of Christ*, and the glorious salvation that flows from his cross! Happy they whose eyes the divine grace has opened to see the glory of the *Lord Jesus*; who believe his excellencies, not only from what they read of them, but also from what they feel of their soul-transforming efficacy.—O Christian, let this study be thy constant business! Neglect not other knowledge in its place; but let that of *Christ crucified* have the warmest affections of thy heart, and all other be subservient to thy improvements in this;—and think of that happy hour, when, delivered from the darkness that will always hang over the vale of mortality, thou shalt ascend to the worlds of immortal light, and there see thy *once-crucified Redeemer*, in all the most delightful glories of his love and grace!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLIII.

*—Whatsoever things are true—honest—just—
pure—lovely—of good report:—if there be any
virtue, any praise, think of those things.*

Phil. iv. 8.

IT is one excellency of the Bible, that it gives us the most perfect system of morality; sets every duty, both to God and man, in the clearest light; and at the same time affords us the most natural, rational, and powerful motives to enforce our practice.

The several particulars of duty suggested in our text, and the general comprehensive clauses in the close of it, are very expressive, and teach us, not only to aim at being *universally virtuous*, but *illustriously* so; or that our moral character may be not only just, but strikingly beautiful; such as may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and *become* his gospel: and, in a word, that we study not only what is barely moral, but also what is

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praise-worthy. This, I am afraid, is too little attended to by many, who set up for the stricter forms of godliness, the most orthodox faith, and even a superstitious strictness of virtue, in some peculiar instances. — They are sour, morose, and discover much more ill-nature than grace, in their resentments against those particular sins that happen to offend them, and contradict their own peculiarities; — they reprove, but they want that tenderness, that engaging benevolence of manner, that is necessary to render their reproofs effectual; their very pretences to a more rigid virtue are weak, inconsistent, and accompanied with uncharitable censures, and bigotted zeal, such as render their characters mean, if not contemptible. — They scarcely *think* of any thing that is really amiable, and praise-worthy, much less *practise* it. — Yet of *these things* the apostle exhorts us to *think*; — that is — to study a due acquaintance with them; ponder upon them with delight; lay them up in our hearts; and beg of God to write them there in living characters, never to be obliterated. — And therefore *think* of them so as to influence our *practise*; and inspire

spire us with the divine ambition of shining in them as exemplary lights in a dark world.

To all this, the gracious constitution we are under, the gospel of Christ particularly obliges us.—There every moral excellency, every thing amiable and praise-worthy, are gloriously displayed, and set the character of our Redeemer in a light peculiarly clear and striking;—and to the imitation of that character, in these, and all other virtues, we are there urgently called.—For this end we are told Christ shed his precious blood;—to this end he gives us his holy spirit, whose grace teaches us, and enables us, to excel in all righteousness; and particularly to adorn the whole of our conversation with the most perfect and amiable benevolence.—For this purpose we are called upon to *look to Jesus*, and consider his example, who was not only temperate, chaste, devout, patient; but kind, A compassionate, and the true friend of mankind.—In him there was nothing mean, selfish, vain, trifling, but a noble and unaffected simplicity, and divine dignity, apparent in his whole conduct.—And such, in their less perfect degree, were his apostles;—whose example we are also exhorted to follow.

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So many and so powerful are the reasons that urge us to exert our utmost endeavours towards carrying our evangelical morality to the highest pitch of perfection; and to recommend, by the lustre of our example, the divine religion we profess, at least, to the consciences of mankind!

Oh, that every one who assumes the great and glorious name, a *believer in Jesus*, would indeed *think of these things*! Would think, not only of the doctrines and duties of what we properly call *religion*; but of *whatsoever is pure, decent, just, lovely, and of good report*; and seek, indeed, for *honour, and glory, and virtue*!— Endeavour to shine brighter and brighter in all the moral excellencies of the Christian character; and be incessantly aspiring after that perfection of holiness, that reigns in the worlds of perfect purity above!

MEDITATION XLIV.

O love the LORD, all ye his saints.:

Pfal. xxxi. 23.

TWO things, amongst many others, it is our duty and interest to be well acquainted with, viz. *What GOD has done for us*; and *what he requires of us*. Both these are comprised in the word LOVE.—The LOVE of GOD is the spring of all his merciful dispensations towards us; and our love to him the spring of all our obedience. This latter is what the text above leads me now more particularly to exercise my thoughts upon; and this implies in it, some just apprehensions and knowledge of his excellencies;—a suitable esteem and admiration of them;—a reigning desire of nearness to him, and enjoyment of his friendship;—a peculiar pleasure and satisfaction in that enjoyment;—a solicitous concern to do every thing to please him;—and a constant remembrance of him, and thinking upon him with delight.

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Such an affection, or disposition of mind, towards the great and blessed God, is highly rational; perfectly consistent with the nature of man, and his relation to God, and obligations to his mercy; and, therefore, a very different thing from enthusiastic imagination or fanaticism. — It is pure, and entirely free from all gross ideas; — sincere and real, as opposed to all hypocrisy; — supreme and fervent, above and beyond what is exercised upon any other object of the affections; and, in its own nature, improving and everlasting.

The ground and reasons of this divine affection are many; such as, the amiableness of God; his wisdom, justice, truth, goodness — his relation to us, as the father of our spirits — the many great and surprising instances of his kind regard to our happiness; particularly, that of the gift of his Son as our Redeemer, and his Holy Spirit as our sanctifier — his express commands, so often repeated in his book; — and, finally, the great concern this *love of God* has in our present and final happiness; it being impossible we should think of God, with any pleasure, but as we see him in the amiable light of his gospel, and feel our hearts disposed to cleave

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to him as the supreme good, the object of our complacential delight. But, here let us remember how necessary it is for us to entertain right apprehensions of God, and form just notions of his character.—Some are too ready to think him altogether such a one as themselves; and form a notion of his character, that best agrees with their own, and is suited to their depraved taste.—The vicious and profligate imagine he is as little concerned about moral rectitude, as themselves; and that he is so good as to allow them to indulge with impunity, the frailties and corruptions of their nature; and, by loving this idea of God, flatter themselves that they love him. The morose, and malignant, frame to themselves the idea of a DEITY, as unbenevolent and implacable as their own hearts; and, because they love this idol of their imagination, think they love the true God.

Let us, therefore, be cautious here, and see that our ideas of the divine nature and character be just:—such as the Bible gives us; such as tend to excite our veneration and esteem, and inspire us with penitential hope and purity in ourselves, and integrity and benevolence

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nevolence towards others! — A God just to punish sin, and yet so *merciful* as to forgive it; punish it, in the temporary sufferings of his dear Son, or the final destruction of the impenitent sinner; and yet forgive the penitent believer in Jesus. It is then, and then only, we love God, when we love THAT God the Scriptures reveal, as the Great Creator, the glorious Ruler, the gracious Father and Friend of mankind; God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.

Oh, love the Lord, ye saints,

And sound his praises high;

His ear attends to your complaints,

His help is ever nigh.

From heaven he sent his Son,

To shed his precious blood,

For all your numerous sins t'atone,

And bring you near to God.

Think on this wond'rous grace,

And love th' adored name;

And with the breath of tuneful praise,

Oh, fan the sacred flame!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLV.

Then said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.— Luke xxiii. 34.

THE enemies of our Blessed Redeemer had now done all that the infernal influence they were under could suggest, in order to ruin his reputation and his cause.— They had falsely accused him; procured his condemnation by tumultuous violence, without the least shadow of justice; they had scourged and reviled him, derided and spit upon him; wounded his head with a crown of thorns, and pierced his hands and his feet, by nailing them to the accursed tree. Amidst the agonies of crucifixion they ridiculed his pretensions of being the *Son of God*, and the *Saviour of men*, and with the most insufferable insolence triumphed over him. Yet under all this unparalleled provocation, not a resenting word escapes him, but he exhibits the most perfect pattern of self-government, patience, and forbearance; resignation to the will of God, and kindness to his enemies; just as the prophet foretold—*Though oppressed, and afflicted, he opened not his mouth:*
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he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb. Isa. liii. 7. Instead of reproaching them for their inhuman wickedness, he apologizes for it, by imputing it to their *ignorance*, and pours out his most fervent prayer for their *pardon*;—*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!!* What amazing goodness is this!—Are ye not ashamed, *ye infidels*, are ye not ashamed to vilify and scorn, and load with your reproaches a character so infinitely amiable as this! Can you wonder that we should boast of such a Saviour, and *glory even in his cross*, where we see him completing a righteousness so pleasing to God, so instructive and salutary to man? Surely, he must be worthy of our highest admiration, love, and praise, who, amidst such a variety of the most irritating sufferings, could so effectually subdue all the angry passions, which even his sinless nature was liable to; support himself with such a noble superiority to all the weaknesses of humanity; and breathe out his last in the language of the most tender compassion for his murderers! — Talk ye of *virtue*! — Here is an instance of *virtue*, that puts to everlasting silence all the proudest boasts of philosophy;

phy; and throws a lustre on the Redeemer's character, that utterly extinguishes all the glory, not only of the *Alexanders* and *Cæsars* of this world, but even that of the greatest benefactors and deliverers of mankind, as the unclouded splendour of the meridian sun extinguishes the feeble brightness of the stars!

But while we thus contemplate with just admiration the divine excellencies of the *blest Jesus*, let us attend to the important lessons we are here taught respecting our *own* temper and conduct.—Here we learn to suffer cheerfully in the cause of *truth*;—to deny ourselves the dearest enjoyments of life, and even life itself, when the glory of God, and the immortal interest of mankind require it—to bear reproach and scorn, and the most cruel oppressions, for the sake of a good conscience, with a dignity of mind that scorns the meanness of revenge—yea, even to compassionate the condition of our most violent and bloody persecutors, and to pray earnestly to the Father of mercies to grant them *repentance* and *forgiveness*.

This is the meekness and patience, the placability and benevolence, the gospel of Christ teaches us. To extinguish the base spirit of revenge,

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revenge, and to dispose us to forgive the grossest injuries, with the noblest generosity, is one of the many, and not the least, distinguishing glories of the doctrine of the cross; and what the Lord Jesus himself has abundantly illustrated by the whole tenor of his conduct through life, and in the awful article of death, by pouring out this *pathetic supplication* in favour of men that were imbruing their hands in his blood, and laughing at his expiring agonies!

And if we are taught thus to treat even our most inveterate enemies, how much more our Christian friends! How ready should we be to excuse their weaknesses, to forgive the injuries they may ignorantly or rashly do us, and to intercede with our common *Father* that he would *forgive them too!*

My soul, look thou to JESUS. See how patiently and benevolently *He endured the contradiction of sinners. Learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart!* Observe, with teachable reverence, how superior *He* was to all those weak and angry resentments, to which thou art so prone upon the most trifling occasions; and which, while they gratify the corruption of thy nature, greatly injure thy immortal interest, and shockingly disgrace the Christian name!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLVI.

*The Lord is good unto them that wait for him,
to the soul that seeketh him.*

Lament. iii. 25.

THOUGH the contents of the book, from whence this text is taken, are principally of the mournful kind, and express the extreme sorrows of a great and good man, upon a public and very interesting occasion; yet in the midst of the most pathetic descriptions of his grief, we find many references to those divine consolations, which the truly pious have always found in their God. The Lamentation therefore is not of that despairing sort, which they, who have no true faith in the divine word, so frequently pour out over the losses they sustain of their desirable things. Here are no violent exclamations against blind fortune; no impious reflections upon the Divine Providence, none of that wild ungovernable desperation that refuses all comfort. No, our *prophet* mourns with all

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the dignity of a *man of God*: that is, with the most reverent thoughts of the majesty and power of the DEITY, and the righteousness of his judgments;—with humble confession of his sin, and humble hope of the divine mercy.

Of all the subjects of distress to which human nature is liable, there is none (a wounded conscience excepted) that sinks so deeply into the heart of a truly good man as *public calamities*; the decay of piety and virtue; the prevalence of vice; and the confusion and misery that naturally follow, to society in general, and the church of God in particular.

They, indeed, whose souls are so narrow as to take in no concerns, but those that immediately relate to themselves and their families, feel little of this affection, any further than they themselves are particularly concerned in it. But this was not the case of the good *Jeremiah*; his heart bled for his miserable country; and all his own particular concerns, of the afflictive kind, were entirely lost in the general distress he here laments. His sorrow was the sorrow of thousands, and comprehended the interest of *religion*, and the whole body of the *state*, then lying in ruins. And what gave a peculiar energy to his grief, was

was the great and crying sins of his countrymen, which brought down these desolating judgments upon them.

But how great and tedious soever our afflictions are, a lively faith in the oracles of God will afford us effectual relief. We shall there see, that he is the Lord of universal nature, and presides particularly over the affairs of men, from the mightiest nations to the meanest individual;—that he is *good* in every sense of the word, righteous, faithful, benevolent, merciful, the BEST OF BEINGS;—that his infinite power always operates under the direction and influence of his infinite love; and that he has solemnly engaged, that *all things shall work together for good to them that love him.* Thus he is —

Good, when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies;
E'en *crosses* from his sovereign hand,
Are *blessings* in disguise.

HERVEY.

Though he may afflict us with the forest calamities, yet if we *wait for him and seek him*; believe his gracious word, repent of our sins,

study to do his will, and seek his mercy in CHRIST, as our only *Mediator*, we shall find him good; *good to us*. He will this way promote our spiritual interest;—make us more wise, watchful, heavenly-minded; disengage our affections from their intemperate attachment to this world; draw them out with pleasing ardour after a better; and reward our faith and patience with the more abundant honour and felicity there.

This pleasing idea of God is strongly expressed in every part of the Bible. The history, precepts, promises, prayers, and praises, all declare the amiableness of the DEITY, and that He is, he must be, *good to all that wait for him, and seek him*.

Let me then, however afflicted and borne down by the sorrows of this mortal life, never lose sight of this supporting, this delightful truth, God is good; but always trust and rejoice in him, with the assured hope of finding him my sweetest *consolation in time*, and my infinitely satisfying *portion in ETERNITY*!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLVII.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us
any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy
countenance upon us.* Psal. iv. 6.

THE desire of happiness is so natural to mankind, that there is not an individual but feels it. It is the spring of all the industry and labour of our hearts, and heads, and hands. But the *many* too generally mistake both the thing itself, and the means of attaining to it.—*Who will shew us any good?* is the cry of all; but too few fix upon the *light of the divine countenance* as any part of their wish; or apply to God by prayer, and the use of the other means of grace, for the satisfaction of it. But yet, there are a few who think and act upon better principles. The Psalmist spoke the language of some besides himself then; and there are some who can heartily join with him now in the same request.—

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The good of the *many* is that of corrupted nature, of the *few* that of renewing grace. The one is the scope and aim of the schemes and endeavours of the men of this world; the other of those who seek a better country. — The one is the genuine dictate of sense, or mere reason; the other of divine faith, and of reason refined and exalted by it. — The spring and source of the low desire and relish in the first case, is — wilful ignorance and unbelief; too great a relish for this world; or, at best, a conscience deluded by the false promises of repentance and better conduct in future. — The exalted wish expressed by the Psalmist, arises from a sense of the insufficiency of all created good; an understanding enlightened by the word and spirit of God; a vital faith in his promises; a true relish for the duties and joys of religion, and communion with God; and a mind actually under the governing influence of the gospel of Christ. —

— To all so disposed, the light of the divine countenance is above all things desirable, as including in it some of the greatest and most important blessings our nature is capable of enjoying; such as — pardon, holiness, a
right

right to eternal life; the presence of God in the institution of religion; the sweet foretaste and assurance of the highest felicity and glory; in a complete likeness to the blessed God; and the everlasting enjoyment of his favour; all which must be infinitely preferable to any worldly, or merely temporal enjoyment whatsoever. For it enters deeper into the constitutional principles of our nature; does not, as all other pleasures do, float upon the surface of the mind, but penetrates the very heart and conscience.—The *good* the many seek is transitory and uncertain; this, of the *light of God's countenance*, sure and eternal. The former seldom or ever rises up to the expectation, and often sinks greatly below it, the latter always exceeds it.—The pleasures of the many are hurtful, and often ruinous; those of the pious always salutary, and conducive to their real happiness.—The former is a narrow scanty pittance, a mere sip of the cup of joy; the latter is indeed the satisfying fulness of it, and comprehends all that our natures can either crave or possess. While, therefore, others seek after this mean imperfect *good*, Lord, will the true Christian say, *lift up the light of thy countenance upon me!*
—Make

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—Make me to know thy salvation; give me a clearer view of the excellency and sufficiency of thy Son's atoning blood, for my reconciliation to thee. In his cross the light of thy countenance shines forth in all its most delightful lustre. Thence spring my best hopes, my real holiness, my strongest consolations, and sublimest joys! In his person, I see THEE, as the most gracious and merciful; plenteous in redemption; and every way most amiable, most adorable. Here would I always dwell in my devout meditations! here fix my thoughts, and centre all my desire. Oh, let this glory break into my benighted heart, and transform me *into the same image*! —I cannot be *satisfied, till I awake in thy likeness*!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLVIII.

*For the kingdom of GOD is not meat and drink,
but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy
Ghost.* Rom. xiv. 17.

THE fall of man has so miserably depressed and sensualized his heart, that he not only doats upon this world, and pursues its enjoyments as his chief good; but when RELIGION appears with a friendly hand to point out a better, he does not understand her; and imagines she means, at most, but some slight alteration in his conduct; and this in respect of his *external* behaviour, and appearances to the *world*, rather than the *inward* principles, and governing disposition of his *heart*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ found this the prevailing sentiment and conduct amongst even the teachers of religion in his time, and highly censures it. And amongst us, who are better enlightened, numbers look too much to the *externals* of religion; and, under the
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most solemn pretences to it, seek the gratification of their senses, or at best their deluded imaginations, rather than the true spiritual life and comfort of their souls by the grace of the gospel.

About these *externals* of religion, many of the warmest controversies, even in the earliest days of Christianity, were concerned. Too many then thought, that the *kingdom of Christ* had more to do with this world than it really had, and that it included much more of the polity and delights of it, than he ever intended it should. They imagined, that there was nothing in his religion to forbid their most intemperate desires after the enjoyment of the riches and honours and pleasures of the world; and that their most guilty excesses in gratifying these desires at one time, might be easily and effectually atoned for by superstitious fopperies and humiliations, of their own invention, at another.

But what says the apostle? Just the reverse: *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink.*—It is set up in direct opposition to all gluttony, drunkenness, and worldly lust; and yet it does not lie in the superstitious self-denial, fanciful mortification, and merely bodily worship

ship of the mistaken devotee ;—No, it is something infinitely more pure and spiritual ; more great and sublime ; more worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God ; more salutary and beneficial to us. It is *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* ; or in other words, it is *vital holiness — social goodness — and spiritual pleasure*.—The main design of all its precepts and promises is, to purify our polluted natures, restore them to the moral likeness of the DEITY, and the everlasting enjoyment of his favour ; — to extinguish all the base, treacherous, and cruel passions ; — inspire us with the love of truth and justice, and the most disinterested benevolence ; — and dispose us to relish with peculiar satisfaction the love of Christ, and the pleasures of the spiritual and eternal world. In the possession of such *principles*, in the practice of such *virtues*, and the experience of such *delights*, consisteth the *religion of JESUS, or kingdom of God*.

Let me then be very seriously attentive to the governing disposition and affections of my heart, that I may not, as too many do, take up with any thing under the notion of religion, but that which I learn in the gospel of Christ, understood in its genuine simplicity.

Dreadful

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Dreadful beyond all my present powers of conception, must be the consequences of being deceived in this matter: for however I may flatter and impose upon myself, the all-seeing God cannot be mocked.—He is not to be imposed on by the most specious pretences. He utterly abhors, not only all *sensuality*, but all *hypocrisy*. Nor can he be *pleased* with the empty parade of superstition, or the irrational devotions of enthusiasm, though ever so sincere; nor even *forgive* them, if there be not something better in the heart, a principle of vital faith in Christ, a relish for true *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Be it then thy serious study, O my soul, to know the will of thy God, and do it. *Let the word of Christ dwell in thee richly in all wisdom*. That both the *theory* and *practice* of thy religion may be founded in the true grace of God; render thee happy in thyself, and a blessing to others; and be attended at last with an abundant entrance into the *kingdom of God* above; where thy *righteousness and peace* will be perfect, and thy *joy* indeed UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY!

MEDITA-

MEDITATION XLIX.

On the last Day in the Year.

But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober— 1 Pet. iv. 7.

THE year is now drawing towards its close—let me pause a little and consider:—I am a rational and immortal creature, borne along on the rapid current of time towards the amazing world of ETERNITY. *The end even of ALL things*, the apostle tells me, *is at hand*—the period then of my life here cannot be far off. *This* may perhaps be the last year of it. But oh how surprisingly different the *manner* of my existence when this present mode of it is ended! As a sinner against a good and gracious God, my own heart tells me, that I have nothing to expect in that state but the most painful destruction! Tremendous thought!—But is there no hope for sinners?—Adored be the divine grace, there is. JESUS the Son of GOD appears in

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the character of a Saviour, *able to save unto the uttermost ALL that come unto GOD by him.* These are glad-tidings indeed, *words worthy of all acceptation?* If I have any just sense of my condition as a sinner, any relish for the pleasures of the divine friendship, they will be so to me. Let me then, while the moments are passing swiftly on, lay hold on this hope, and improve it to the best purposes. But to this end I must BE SOBER—must think seriously of my guilt, and repent of it with that contrition of heart the gracious God will not despise:—think, what it cost the *Lord Jesus* to redeem me to this blessed hope;—think, how many and great the dangers that attend me from my own ignorance, weakness, depravity, and the power of my spiritual enemies!—And think too, how shameful my sin, and how fearful my punishment, if, with this hope before me, I should *neglect so great salvation* as the gospel of Christ proposes to me! In order to be *sober*, I must think also on the great end of my being, and keep it seriously in view; must be *moderate* not only in the indulgence of my bodily appetites, but in respect of all the affections of my mind; even my *zeal for God*, and the *faith*

faith of the gospel, must be *according to knowledge*; and be always tempered with BENEVOLENCE and CANDOUR, and that CHARITY that *hopeth all things*; free from all bigotry and persecution. In a word, if I would be indeed *sober*, in the apostle's sense, I must fit loose to this world, fear God, and maintain daily communion with him; *set my affections on things that are above*, and remember the great and awful account I have to give to him who shall judge the quick and the dead!

I hope, through the divine grace, I have been enabled to live thus *soberly* in the main. But is there no room for improvement?—Are all the lower powers of my nature so *entirely* under the control of grace as they should be?—Amidst the more gay and cheerful scenes of life, do I still preserve my relish for the pleasures of religion in its ruling power? Amidst the afflictions of life, are my sorrows moderated by just ideas of the future world, and my hope in its blessedness?

O ETERNITY! How amazing, how awful, how delightful, thy greatness! May I think of thee, and the infinitely important concerns I have in thee, with the highest *reverence*, and yet with pleasing *hope*! JESUS lives; to him

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I have committed all my immortal interests; he is able to save me from the ruin that threatens me in the invisible regions! in HIM, therefore, I *rejoice*, while at *thy darkness* I tremble!—May then all my *new years* and *days* of continuance here on earth be spent in true *evangelical sobriety*, a *cheerful seriousness*, every way becoming my present frailty, and *the good hope* I have, through *grace*, of an happy immortality! And when the solemn close of my time, my life, and every mortal interest, comes, may I *be found in Christ*; enjoy the comforts of his redeeming love; find an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom, and in the *visions* of HIS *glory*, possess indeed BEATITUDE
PAST UTTERANCE. Amen!!

END of the MEDITATIONS.



APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

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CONSIDERATIONS
On the prevailing Custom
OF VISITING ON SUNDAYS.

THE Sentiments here offered against the prevailing Custom of profaning the Sabbath, will probably be a Satisfaction to every serious Reader, and be productive of much Good, especially as it is in every one's Power to reform Himself, and as then his own Conduct will be a tacit Re-proof to his Acquaintance, who may probably through his Example be induced to weigh these Proceedings attentively, and no longer follow a Multitude to do Evil.—It is certainly a Matter of Importance to inquire whether Sunday Visits are justifiable on the Principles of Scripture and of Reason? as the conscientious Observation of the Sabbath has of late Years been so much disregarded; and as it is now become the principal Day of Visiting among Per-

sons of all Ranks. The chief Advocates for the Continuance of such a Practice should methinks defend it publicly, that their Arguments may be properly examined, if (in their Opinion) such a Custom can admit of any rational Defence. And those who are sufficiently convinced by what is here advanced, should resolve to discontinue Sunday Visits themselves, and discountenance them in others as far as they can consistently with Decency and Prudence.—That the Number of such as are thus well-disposed may be daily increasing, is undoubtedly the hearty Wish of every one who is sincerely desirous of promoting the Glory of GOD, and the Good of Mankind.

QUÆRE. *Whether it be right for TRULY-SERIOUS Persons to visit on Sundays?*

THE Persons here mentioned, are the *truly-serious*. As to many People, it matters not whether they are at Home or Abroad: GOD is not in all their Thoughts; they have no Concern for their eternal Welfare; they therefore are, in every Place, altogether and alike unprofitable.

But when we begin to discern the Things
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that are excellent; when we sincerely desire to “obtain Salvation, with eternal Glory, by JESUS CHRIST;” *then*, whether it be proper to fall in with the prevailing Custom of visiting on *Sundays*, is the Question.

Were our Companions religious, and was our Conversation edifying, I should make no Scruple to give my Voice in the Affirmative. Every Parlour would then be a little Sanctuary; would echo back the Exhortations, and second the Designs of the Pulpit. And we might truly say, *It is good for us to be here.*

But, alas! where do we find such Company? When do we hear such Conversation? The general Conversation is all Impertinence. Not so much as seasoned with a Spice of Religion. *They talk of Vanity every one with their Neighbour*, Psalm xii. 2.—For which Reason, I cannot think it safe or expedient, allowable or innocent, HABITUALLY to visit on *Sundays*.

It is inconsistent with the best Example. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, says St. John. I was filled with the Communications of the HOLY SPIRIT, giving me clear Views of CHRIST, bright Hopes of Glory, and shedding abroad the Love of God in my Heart. But is this compatible with the idle, trifling, insignificant

insignificant Chat, which engrosses our ordinary Visits?

OBJECTION I. *Will it be said, the Apostle's was a peculiar Case?*

I answer, It was a *peculiarly-happy* Case. And will a prudent Christian relinquish the Prospect of such unspeakable Happiness, for the most empty and delusive Amusements? But, I believe, it was *not peculiar* to the Apostle; rather the common Privilege of all Believers; written as a Pattern for their Practice, and to be the Plan of their Expectations.

It is contrary to the Divine Prohibition. The negative Law relating to the Sabbath, is, *Not doing thy own Ways, Not finding thy own Pleasure, Not speaking thy own Words*, Isaiah lviii. 13. *Not doing thy own ways*; abstaining from secular Business, and all worldly Pursuits. *Not finding thy own Pleasure*; renouncing all those Recreations and Amusements, which may tend to gratify thy Taste, not to glorify thy Almighty LORD. *Not speaking thy own Words*; conversing on spiritual, sublime, and heavenly subjects, not on low, earthly, temporal Matters, which, having no Reference to the Creator's Honour, are therefore called *thy own*. However some People may

may act, or whatever they may think, this is the express and unalterable Law, established by the GOD of Heaven. Whether it be possible to mingle in modish Company, and obey this Law, let those judge who are acquainted with the World.

It breaks the Divine Command. The positive Law relating to the Sabbath is, *Remember the Sabbath-Day, to keep it holy.* REMEMBER, take particular Notice of THIS Injunction *. It is a Duty greatly to be regarded, and most conscientiously to be observed. Upon the due Observance of this, our Disposition and Ability to observe the other Precepts, in good Measure depends. *Keep it holy*; devote it to holy Purposes; spend it in holy Exercises;

* The merciful and benevolent *Creator* intended the *Sabbath* as a Day of *Rest* for the *Cattle* as well as for *Men*: And it is a Degree of *Cruelty*, as well as a *Breach* of the Divine Commandment, to use our *Cattle* on *Sundays*, except in Cases of *absolute Necessity*.— And that we may not deceive ourselves by calling those Cases of *Necessity*, which are *not* so, let every one, when he is going to use his *Cattle* on a *Sunday*, ask himself, as in the Presence of God, whether He really thinks it a Case of such *Necessity*, as will justify his doing it, at the Day of Judgment?

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and not barely an Hour or two; not barely the Intervals of public and private Devotion; but the Day; the Sabbath-Day; the whole Day. Neither will the whole Day be too long, if we make Conscience of discharging the several Duties of Religion, Reading and Meditation; Prayer and Praise; Teaching our Children, and instructing our Domestics; examining our Hearts, and taking Heed to our Ways. All these Offices, if properly performed, will leave very little, rather no Time, for unnecessary Employments. And shall we huddle over all these important Offices, or totally neglect some of them, only to indulge ourselves in the most unprofitable Levities? At once doing an Injury to our spiritual Interests, and violating the Divine Precept?

I fear it will be a Kind of *crucifying afresh our blessed Master*, Heb. vi. 6. This Expression we have often read, but think ourselves free from the Guilt implied in it, and indeed from the very Likelihood of contracting it. But let us be reminded, that *we crucify our LORD afresh*, when we give others Occasion to conclude, that we have very little Esteem for him, or Gratitude to him. Consequently, that he has little or no Excellency, for which we or others

others should desire him. Now what else can the World conclude, when they see us giving into the Vanities of a licentious Mode, on that very Day which is sacred to the Commemoration of his Resurrection? "Surely, might the Children of this World say, if these Christians had any real Reverence for their LORD, they would shew it on *his own* Day. They would either be retired to contemplate and adore him; or else come abroad to exalt and glorify him. But they come abroad to be as frothy in their Talk, and as trifling in their Temper, as forgetful of their SAVIOUR, and as regardless of his Honour, as the most errant Wordling among us all." To afford a Handle for such Reflexions, is to wound the REDEEMER in the House of his Friends.

It will *grieve the* HOLY SPIRIT, Ephes. iv. 30. Christians believe, that he is infinitely wise, all-gracious and ever-blessed; that he dwells in their Hearts, and is the Source of all their Holiness and all their Happiness. Therefore we pray daily in our Liturgy, *that the* HOLY SPIRIT *may not be taken from us.* On *Sunday* we commemorate the Descent of this Divine Guest; and are, in a particular Manner, to implore his Presence, and cultivate
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his Influences. But can this be done, by neglecting his express Prohibition, and breaking his positive Command? By disregarding the Examples which he has set before us; and dishonouring that SAVIOUR, whom he delights to magnify? Besides, dare any Mortal presume to say in his Heart amidst a Circle of our polite Visitants, "I am now acting in a Manner becoming my Relation to the Eternal SPIRIT." These Sentiments and this Discourse are suitable to his Dignity, Wisdom, and Glory. A proper Method of celebrating and honouring the Day of his miraculous Mission.

Should any one ask, "What is meant by *grieving the HOLY SPIRIT*?" It means offending his exalted Majesty, and causing him to act as Men commonly act, when they are grieved and displeased with any one; they withdraw from his Company, and visit him no more: When *Samuel* was grieved for *Saul's* Misbehaviour, it is written, "He came no more to see *Saul*." If the Almighty COMFORTER be provoked to deal thus with our Souls, alas! what a Loss must we sustain! A Loss, unspeakable, irreparable, eternal!

So that if this Practice were not sinful, it must be *exceedingly detrimental*. And that, not
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in one only, but in various Respects. Have we received spiritual Good from the public Ordinances? The Admonition of Heaven is, *We ought to give the more earnest Heed to the Things which we have heard, lest at any Time we should let them slip*, Heb. ii. 1. By this Practice, we not only suffer them to slip, but open as it were a Leak for their immediate Discharge. Have we been under edifying Impressions from our private Exercises? The unerring Direction is, *Quench not the Spirit*. Stifle not the serious Desires which he has awakened. Allow them their full Scope, till they are formed into gracious Habits. By the Practice under Consideration, we pour Water instead of Oil upon the feeble Flame. We extinguish what we should cherish. Is the heavenly Seed sown in our Breasts? These dissipating Interviews are the ravenous Birds, which follow the Seedsman, and devour the Grain: so that nothing takes Root. No Fruit of Faith, of Joy, or Love is produced.

Let me only add, That on a Dying Bed, the Misimprovement of all our Time will be most bitterly regretted. How much more the Misimprovement of *those* Hours, which God himself has hallowed; has set apart for the

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noblest Purposes; and is wont to bless in an especial Manner? "While others were seeking the Pearl of great Price, and gathering those Treasures of Wisdom and Grace, which endure to everlasting Life; I, alas! was squandering away the precious Opportunities in very Vanity." To see the Curtain of Time dropping; to see a vast Eternity opening before us; and to have such Reflections haunting our Conscience; this will cause Misery not to be expressed; create Anguish not to be conceived.

OBJECTION II. *Will it be said, in answer to these Considerations, "That Company, even trifling Company, is a Relaxation. We return to the Instruction of our Families, and to our Evening Devotion, with fresh Alacrity, being sick of those Triflers?"*

A strange Argument! It should rather be reversed. The Objectors might truly say, Being sick of Religion and its Services, we want such Triflers to afford us some Relief. The sincere Servant of CHRIST would find no Recreation, but feel Grief at Heart, at such Interviews. It must be a real Affliction to observe his Divine LORD absolutely disregarded. Disregarded on the Day peculiarly devoted

devoted to his Honour. Every Vanity now preferred before him, as *Barabbas* the Robber was formerly. The true Refreshment for our Souls consists in having our Faith increased, our Hope elevated, and our Views of Heaven enlarged. In contemplating the infinite Perfection and Glory of our Redeemer; the infinite Grandeur and Fulness of his Propitiation; and our complete, I might have said, our infinite Security from Wrath and Vengeance, by being interested in his Merits.

OBJECTION III. *“Sunday is the best Part of our Time for this Purpose. Business is suspended. Every Body is ready dressed. All Circumstances invite.”*

Is it the best Part of our Time? Then let it be devoted to the best of Beings. Who is more worthy of our choicest Thoughts, Affections, Hours, than that divinely compassionate Saviour, who offered himself, in the very Prime of his Life, a bleeding Victim for our Sins, that his Sacrifice might have every recommending Circumstance, which would render it acceptable to GOD, and available for Man?

OBJECTION IV. *It is the universal Custom. To discontinue it, would render us unfashionable.*

And cannot you bear to be a little unfashionable for his Sake, who was despised and rejected, who humbled himself to Death, even the Death of the Cross, for your Sake? Is it the universal Custom? Then Custom is the Idol, which we are called to renounce. I must say of Custom, in this Case, as *Elijah* said of *Baal*: If Custom be God, follow its Dictates; but if *JEHOVAH* be GOD, observe his Precepts. It is written in the Scriptures, Rom. xii. 2. *Be not conformed to this World.* To what does this Prohibition relate? To such ungodly Customs, no Doubt. No Battery of Cannon was ever pointed more directly against a Citadel to be demolished, than this Text against such Customs. In indifferent Matters, let the Christian avoid Singularity. Let him dress somewhat like his Neighbours. Let him make an Appearance suitable to his Station. But let him *not follow a Multitude* to profane the Sabbath, or to *do any Evil*. HERE religious Persons should, by all Means, be *singular*; should distinguish themselves by a *becoming* Zeal for their GOD; should set an Example, and shine as Lights, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation. Otherwise, they

they may do, not themselves only, but others also, incredible Harm.

OBJECTION V. *Some perhaps may start and reply, "If these Things are so, to what a Degree of sinful Negligence is even the Christian World arrived?"*

With Regard to the World called Christian, this is too true. And no Measure of Sorrow can be sufficient to bewail the deplorable Degeneracy. Negligence, or rather Obstinacy, in this capital Instance, is a melancholy Indication of no less Disobedience in other Respects.

OBJECTION VI. *"This will be irksome, will render our Religion a Burden."*

I hope, no one that pretends to Seriousness will offer to make this Objection. The Sinners in *Sion* made it. For which Reason they are branded, and by the Divine SPIRIT himself, with Infamy that will never be blotted out. *O! what a Weariness is it! When will the Sabbath, and its irksome Solemnities, be gone? Mal. i. 13. and Amos viii. 5.* This discovers a Heart alienated from GOD; that has not tasted the good Word of Grace, and favours not the Things which be of CHRIST. Otherwise, such would be the Language: "One Day, thus employed, is better than a thousand,

thousand, *Pfalm lxxxiv. 10.* Is it tedious and burthenfome to pafs a *single* Day in devout Exercifes? How then fhall we pafs, how fhall we endure the *Ages* of Eternity? Since we are affured that thofe happy Beings, who ftand around the Throne, clothed with white Robes, ferve their GOD Day and Night, for ever and ever, in his Temple. In the Regions of Immortality they find a Heaven; becaufe, there they have a never-ceafing and eternal Communion with GOD; becaufe there they have an uninterrupted and everlafting Sabbath.

THE END.

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